



2021

State Index on Youth Homelessness



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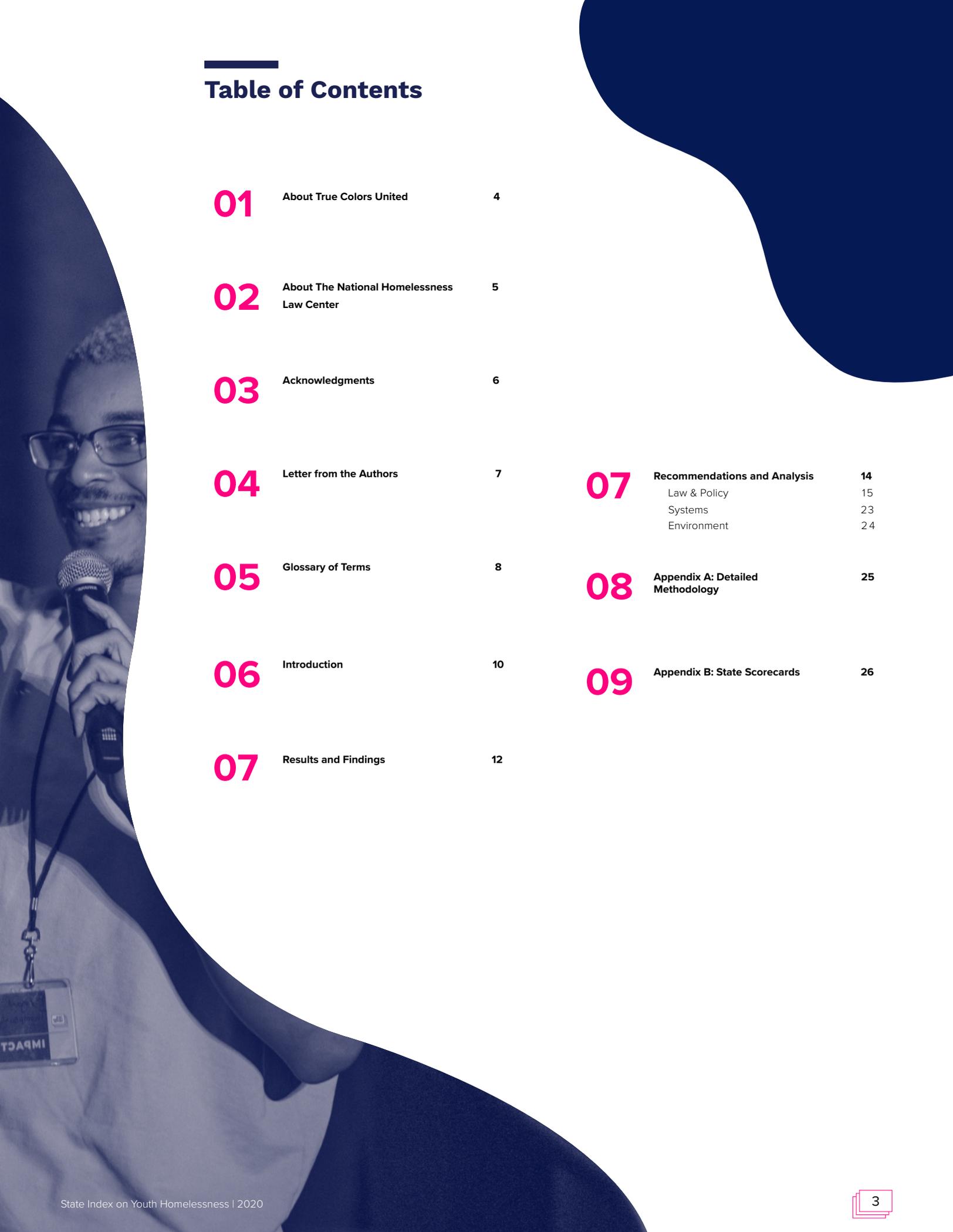
State Index on Youth Homelessness

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About True Colors United

True Colors United implements innovative solutions to youth homelessness that focus on the unique experiences of LGBTQ+ young people.

In the United States, 4.2 million youth experience homelessness each year, with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ+) youth 120% more likely to experience homelessness than their non-LGBTQ peers. True Colors United is committed to changing that.

If we can ensure that services are safe for and affirming of the most impacted young people, we can be confident that they'll be safe and affirming for everyone. We believe that youth homelessness is a community issue. Real change can happen when people come together with a shared vision.

For more information about True Colors United and to access research publications such as this Index, please visit its website at truecolorsunited.org.

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About The National Homelessness Law Center

The National Homelessness Law Center is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C., and seeks to serve as the legal arm of the national movement to end and prevent homelessness.

We believe that the human rights to adequate housing, healthcare, food, and education lie at the heart of human dignity, and we envision a world where no one has to go without the basics of human survival. While seeking universal enjoyment of human rights, we also understand that homelessness disparately impacts Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, women, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and people with disabilities, and those living at the intersections of multiple forms of marginalization, and our policy responses must consciously and affirmatively address those inequities.

Since 1989, we have leveraged the power of the public and private bar to amplify the voices and concerns of those directly impacted by homelessness & poverty. Through policy advocacy, public education, and impact litigation, the Law Center's national programs address the root causes of homelessness and meet the immediate and long-term needs of those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Through training, technical support, and network building, the Law Center also enhances the capacity of local and national groups to become more effective partners in advocating for the needs and rights of people experiencing homelessness.

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True Colors United and the Law Center also express deep gratitude for the contributions of the **Advisory Committee**, composed of state-based policy advocates and experts, whose research, fact-checking, and insights into the policies in their states ensure the accuracy and utility of the report.

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The Law Center would also like to thank our **Homelessness Action Legal Team (HALT)** member law firms: **Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP; Alston & Bird LLP; Baker Donelson PC; Dechert LLP; Goodwin Procter LLP; Kirkland & Ellis LLP; Latham & Watkins LLP; McCarter & English LLP; Microsoft Corporation; Morrison & Foerster LLP; Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP; and WilmerHale.**

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Letter from the Authors

Dear Reader,

We thank young people, providers, advocates, and policymakers for relentlessly working to end youth homelessness. The 2021 index shows significant improvements across the board and we want to take a moment to celebrate progress. While we are proud of states for prioritizing laws, policies, systems, and environments that make the exit from homelessness easier, we also recognize how inhumane policies and practices leave LGBTQ+ youth overrepresented among young people experiencing homelessness.

We're all painfully aware of rising inflation and how it overwhelms our ability to reach economic recovery and purchase necessary items like food and gas or pay rent and utilities. While wealthy Americans have financial safeguards to look at these changes and reevaluate budgets and become cautious of spending, rising costs exacerbate an already tenuous situation for households experiencing food and housing instability, and create an even more impossible situation in the world of homelessness. Bold policy transformation and radical resistance to racist systems and practices are needed to tackle some of the nation's greatest economic challenges.

Our hope is that after you read this report you are inspired and ignited to join the fight to end youth homelessness. This year we wanted to help guide advocates toward enacting change in their communities, so we included policy priorities and advocacy opportunities to disrupt systems. Anyone can join the fight and the first step could be as small, but impactful as sharing one thing you learned from this report with someone else. Building understanding, empathy and compassion in our communities is another critical piece to the movement. We encourage advocates to reach out to us for support, community, and collaboration.

**For justice,
Aleya Jones, Gabriela Sevilla, and F. Dylan Waguespack**

Glossary Of Terms

True Colors United and the National Homelessness Law Center were intentional when choosing the terms found throughout the Index. This included incorporating language that youth experiencing homelessness may use to describe themselves, as well as ensuring that the chosen terms accurately convey how the community wants to be—and should be—represented. To provide clarity, below is a list of commonly used terms and acronyms, arranged alphabetically, found throughout the Index.

C

Child

The Index is about youth experiencing homelessness. It uses various non-legal terms, such as “young people,” “youth,” “youth on their own,” and “unaccompanied youth.” References to these terms include youth who have not reached the legal age of majority and/or who have left home, either at the demand or request of parents or guardians, or of their own volition. By referring to “youth” or “young people,” rather than “children,” we attempt to recognize the unique developmental stage and needs of older children and young adults. The terms “child,” “children,” or “minor” are also used where legally significant in order to track terms that

are used in state statutes, codes, and regulations. Most states define these terms to include youth up to the age of 18, but a growing majority have raised the age for youth either in foster care, the juvenile legal system, or both.

Cisgender

Denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex.

Couch surfing

The act of moving from one temporary living arrangement to another without having a secure and stable place to be.

E

Environment

For the specific purposes of this report, use of the term “environment” refers to the physical, social, or economic factors that influence state homeless youth policy/program implementation.

F

Federal Runaway & Homeless Youth Act

The federal law that provides funding for three pillars of early intervention to address youth experiencing homelessness: street outreach, basic centers, and transitional living.

G

Gender Identity

One’s individual concept of self as man, woman, a gender other than man or woman, a gender that changes over time, a culturally-specific gender (ex. Two-Spirit), or any combination of the above. How one perceives themselves and what they call themselves. One’s gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth, but the overwhelming consensus among the medical community is that gender identity is determinate of sex.

Gender Expression

External appearance of one’s gender identity, usually expressed through behavior,

clothing, haircut or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine, feminine, or androgynous.

H

Homeless

Refers to experiences of sleeping in places not meant for living, staying in shelters, staying in hotels, motels, or campgrounds due to a lack of alternatives staying in cars, parks, or public spaces, or temporarily staying with others (“couch surfing”) while lacking a safe and stable alternative living arrangement. This term can also refer to experiences of living in unsafe or substandard housing, or experiences of chronic housing instability.

L

LGBTQ+

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer and/or questioning.

M

McKinney-Vento

Refers to the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. 11431.

R

Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA)

For the purposes of the Index, the term RHYA is used as shorthand for a law or series of laws at the state level that provides a significant level of prevention, identification, and/or funded early intervention services (drop-in centers, street outreach, community programs, etc.), coordinated entry and assessment (emergency/crisis response, shelters, host homes, transitional housing, etc.), or tailored housing solutions (non-time limited affordable housing, short-term assistance, etc) specifically for unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness.

S

Sexual Orientation

Generally used to describe how a person—if they do—finds themselves sexually, affectionally, and/or romantically attracted to—or strongly interested in—other people in regards to the expressed gender of those people; which gender(s) of people a given person finds they can be in love with and/or wants to be sexually involved with.

State

The use of the terms “state” and “states” include the District of Columbia, unless otherwise noted.

Status offense

Status offenses are behaviors or actions that are legal for adults but punishable by law when performed by legal minors, under the age of 18, e.g., truancy or running away from home.

System

For the specific purposes of this report, the term “system” refers to features of an institution or organization that influence state homeless youth policy/program implementation.

U

Unaccompanied youth

Youth not in the physical custody of their parent, guardian, or custodian.

Y

Youth

Unless otherwise defined within the text, when we use the terms “youth” we are specifically referring to young people ages 12-18.

Young Adults

Unless otherwise defined within the text, when we use the term young adults, we are specifically referring young people ages 18-24.



Introduction

True Colors United and the National Homelessness Law Center are proud to present the 2021 State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index), a report that reviews and scores how each state works to prevent and end youth homelessness through its laws and policies, systems, and environment.

The Index is a measure of policy infrastructure, which should be thought of more as an indicator of a state's readiness to tackle the specific challenges of youth homelessness than an indicator of a state's current success in doing so. The authors of this report know that even in communities where the policy infrastructure to address youth homelessness is solid, housing supply may be depleted, there may be profound poverty, and economic injustices may be pushing people out of housing faster than the homelessness emergency response systems can rehouse them. This is certainly the case in some of the highest-scoring states in the Index – like California and New York – where massive investments in housing supply and a steadfast dedication to economic justice and housing as a human right will be necessary to begin to visibly reduce the numbers of individuals and families experiencing homelessness and create a more inclusive economy where everyone can thrive.

This year we have identified our top three priorities that we hope state and local advocates will champion in their communities. First, we want to ensure each state has a version of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, as it can provide critical funding to programs dedicated to ending youth homelessness. Second, we want to see the end of the criminalization of youth experiencing homelessness by the enforcement of status offenses and the unnecessary harm it causes. Finally, we need to support young people and their dreams. Our third priority is to achieve true access to higher education for youth experiencing homelessness. These are just three of the many ways advocates can leverage the state index in their communities to hold people accountable and demand change.

All considered, the Index is a useful starting place for young people, providers, advocates, and policymakers to ensure their state has the prerequisite policies in writing (and in effect) that they'll need in order to shut down some of the more common pipelines to homelessness among young people. With the policies measured by the Index in place, states can use fiscal resources more efficiently, knowing that their efforts won't be neutralized by an increasing flow of young people into homelessness from the criminal legal and child welfare systems, nor will they be stymied by an environment where critical resources exist but young people don't have the legal capacity to access them.

The 2021 State Index on Youth Homelessness is the fourth edition of this report, which is updated annually to account for policy changes across the states. A close look at the results of this year's Index show that a majority of states are failing youth experiencing homelessness, but they also demonstrate significant progress since the publication of the 2020 Index. In 2021, only 30 states scored higher than 50 points out of 100, compared to 26 in 2020. In 2020, only seven states—the District of Columbia, Washington state, Connecticut, Massachusetts, California, New York, and Maine—earned passing grades of higher than 70 points. In 2021, Louisiana, New Mexico, and Kentucky joined their ranks, now totaling 10 states. The remaining 19 states scored critically low, earning half of the

available points or less.

While those numbers may not seem to indicate much progress, overall, the 2021 Index measured significant improvements across the board. The mean score rose by five points, from 52 in 2020 to 57 in 2021. All but a small handful of states saw their scores increase, whether due to active policy-making or increased transparency of administrative and regulatory policy on state agency websites, a trend which we expect to continue as state governments invest more deeply in their digital presences and adopt user-friendly designs. We don't want to understate the importance of this progress, specifically. One of the key principles behind the Index is that if policies exist but aren't accessible to the public, determining whether those policies are actually enforced is virtually impossible. To the extent that the Index primarily concerns itself with laws and policies that protect the rights, agency, and resources of youth and young adults, without differentiating between statute and state regulatory policy, each metric we measure should be easily findable not just by attorneys and researchers but by young people and advocates.

We continue to be encouraged and inspired by the young people who are leading the charge in advancing many of the policies measured by the Index. While this Index will be published toward the midpoint or tail end of legislative session in most states, we encourage readers of this edition to use it as motivation to find out what policy conversations might be ongoing in your state capitol and throw your support behind young people with lived experience of homelessness, discrimination, and oppression as they work to build a better world for the youth coming up behind them. Advocates should be on the lookout for next year's Index in the final quarter of 2022, and in the meantime, we'll be in touch with as many state-based partners as possible in order to determine what other changes to the Index might be necessary to strengthen it as a tool advocates can use to make change.

Several states are currently weighing spending decisions in the context of a budget surplus due to federal aid provided to the states to address COVID-19. Cost of living is rising in many US cities, and young people are still struggling to access meaningful economic opportunities.¹ While we still don't yet know the full extent of COVID-19's impact on housing and homelessness among youth and young adults across the US, HUD's recently released 2021 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, which primarily focused on sheltered homelessness due to many communities' inability to conduct a Point-In-Time count this past year, found that across the board, the number of young people living in shelter or otherwise being served by a homelessness program that includes shelter or housing was reduced by 8.7 percent from 2020 to 2021.²

Those reductions were not distributed equally among young people. Alarming, the number of transgender youth experiencing

¹ <https://www.epi.org/press/updated-family-budget-calculator-provides-data-on-the-cost-of-living-in-every-county-and-major-metropolitan-area/>

² The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Office of Community Planning and Development. (2022). The 2021 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. Retrieved from: <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2021-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

sheltered homelessness rose by 28.6 percent, and similarly the number of youth who self-identified as gender nonconforming rose by 26 percent.¹ The increased social isolation that has accompanied the pandemic, as well as possible challenges related to extended periods of time that trans young people have been confined with family members who may not be understanding of their children's identities, likely contributed to this increase.

We also can not ignore the dangerous trends in state lawmaking and political rhetoric that attempt to eliminate the existence of transgender children and youth by denying them medically-necessary care, mandating that teachers, school counselors, and school nurses report them to parents who may not be accepting, and even remove them from loving homes by redefining best practices in gender-affirming health care as child abuse. All of these policies are inhumane, violate the basic rights of self-expression and self-determination shared by all people, and would increase risk and incidence of homelessness among trans youth. While the Index doesn't currently account for these policies among its 61 metrics, lawmakers and advocates should expect to see changes in their states' future scores should this trend continue.

State and local advocates, officials, and others should feel free to contact the authors of this State Index report to ask questions, provide feedback, or discuss additional resources and strategies that can be used to advance best practices in youth homelessness laws, policies, systems, and environments. In particular, we invite you to join our State Advocates Network, where we're creating opportunities for young people, providers, advocates, and policymakers to share skills and resources across state lines in support of every state gaining positive momentum toward ending youth homelessness.

¹ The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Office of Community Planning and Development. (2022). The 2021 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. Page 33. Retrieved from: <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2021-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

8.7%

reduction in total number of youth under 24 living in shelters or otherwise being served by a homelessness program that included housing or shelter from 2020 to 2021.

28.6%

increase in *transgender* youth under 24 living in shelters or being served by a homelessness program that included housing or shelter from 2020 to 2021.

10

number of states out of 51 which earned a passing grade of 70 or higher in the 2021 State Index on Youth Homelessness.

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Results & Findings

The Index evaluates each state's and the District of Columbia's investments towards preventing and ending youth homelessness by reviewing certain metrics and benchmarks across laws and policies, systems, and environment. All of them together represent a state's basic policy infrastructure related to homelessness among young people.

The metrics included in the Index are not an exhaustive list of all issues that states must address in order to prevent and end youth homelessness, and a high score on the Index doesn't necessarily indicate that state government is effectively addressing these issues. Many states which earn high scores on the Index face extraordinary challenges in addressing homelessness within their state lines for reasons not captured by the Index, including their state's broader economic policies and climate, as well as community-level approaches to homelessness and housing supply issues. As young people, providers, policymakers, advocates, and others review the results of the Index, keep in mind that a high score doesn't suggest an endorsement of those approaches by True Colors United or the National Homelessness Law Center. Similarly, many states with lower scores on the Index may be putting forward herculean efforts to meet the needs of youth and young adults experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Advocates and policymakers in those states shouldn't be discouraged from their efforts, rather we hope they'll consider the Index a valuable resource to supplement their work.

While the Index may not capture the full dynamics of how a state tackles youth homelessness, it provides a snapshot, with the metrics tied to constructive steps states could take in order to improve their laws, policies, systems, and environments for youth experiencing homelessness. Annual updates of the Index will include additional metrics as states begin to make progress and as innovative practices start to become more commonplace. States should address the gaps identified by the metrics and, if possible, incorporate lessons learned from innovative approaches happening on the local, state, and/or federal levels. The Index also provides overall recommendations that apply to all states.

To find out how each state performed against the Index's metrics and the existing gaps that need to be addressed, please refer to the individual state scorecards in Appendix A and the detailed state scoring spreadsheet, available online at: bit.ly/2021Index. Each scorecard provides individual states' quick facts and statistics that break down their ranking, their overall score, and their performance for each category in Law and Policy, Systems, and Environment. The scorecard also provides key highlights on how each state has moved the needle on addressing youth homelessness and some recommendations in order to improve their performance. The detailed scoring spreadsheet shows which of the 61 metrics each state meets, so that youth, lawmakers, providers, and advocates can prioritize the policy changes that are most pressing in their communities.

How the States Scored
Results

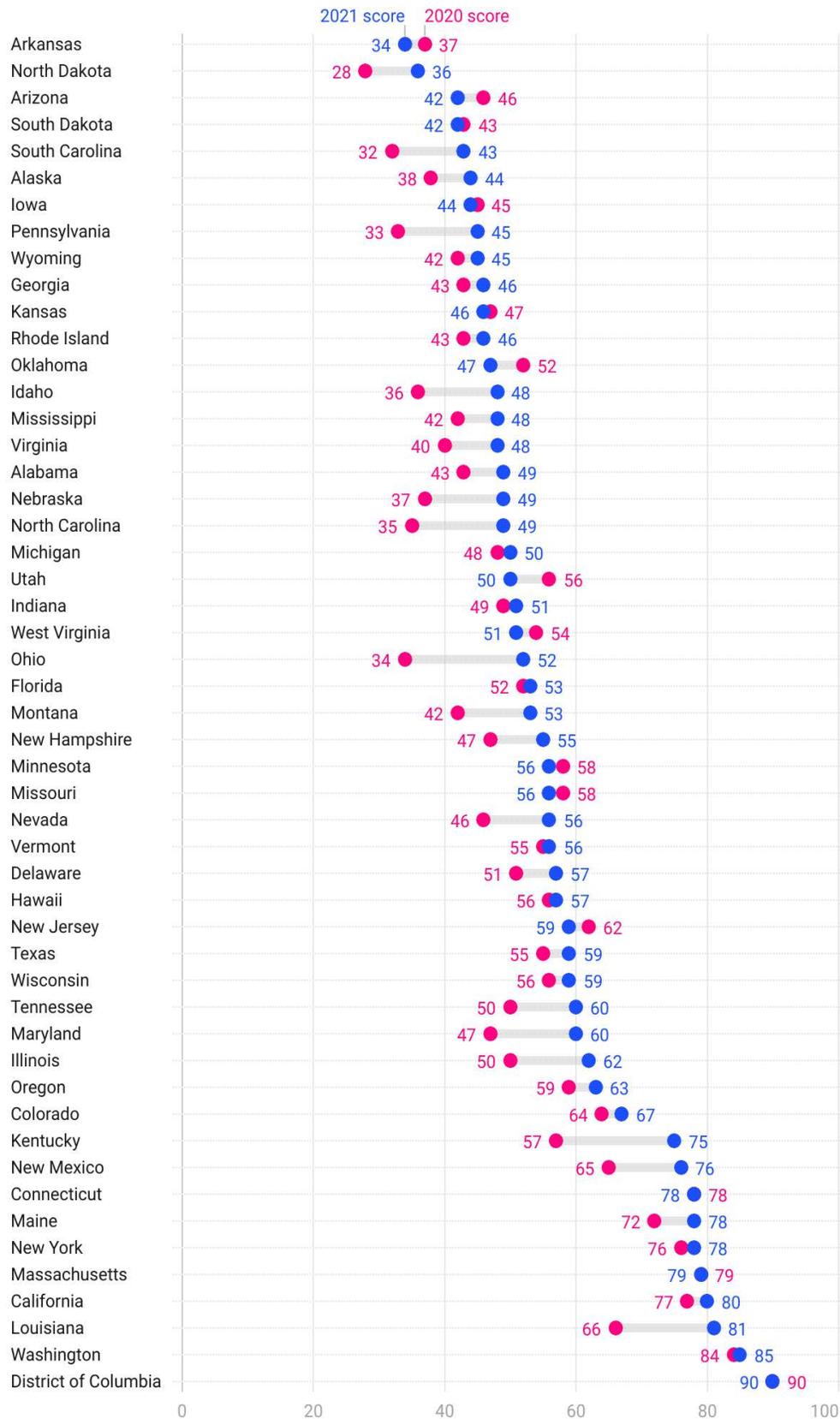
State	Score / 100	Ranking / 51
District of Columbia	90	1
Washington	85	2
Louisiana	81	3
California	80	4
Massachusetts	79	5
Connecticut	78	6
Maine	78	6
New York	78	6
New Mexico	76	9
Kentucky	75	10
Colorado	67	11
Oregon	63	12
Illinois	62	13
Tennessee	60	14
Maryland	60	14
New Jersey	59	16
Texas	59	16
Wisconsin	59	16
Delaware	57	19
Hawaii	57	19
Minnesota	56	21
Missouri	56	21
Nevada	56	21
Vermont	56	21
New Hampshire	55	25
Florida	53	26

State	Score / 100	Ranking / 51
Montana	53	26
Ohio	52	28
Indiana	51	29
West Virginia	51	29
Michigan	50	31
Utah	50	31
Alabama	49	33
Nebraska	49	33
North Carolina	49	33
Idaho	48	36
Mississippi	48	36
Virginia	48	36
Oklahoma	47	39
Georgia	46	40
Kansas	46	40
Rhode Island	46	40
Pennsylvania	45	43
Wyoming	45	43
Alaska	44	45
Iowa	44	45
South Carolina	43	47
Arizona	42	48
South Dakota	42	49
North Dakota	36	50
Arkansas	34	51

How the States Scored Comparisons

Note on State Score Comparisons:

This chart displays state score changes from 2020 to 2021. States are ordered from lowest to highest 2021 score.



Key Recommendations & Analysis

The following section lists each metric measured in the State Index. Some metrics are followed by brief examples based in real life that demonstrate the importance of the principles behind the metrics. Some of these examples show the consequences of a state's failure to consider these issues. Others show the beneficial outcomes that can be achieved by young people when they have appropriate services and support.

The metrics bolded in each subsection below are weighted more heavily in the calculation of final scores due to their critical importance in ending youth homelessness. For more information on scoring, please refer to **Appendix A: Detailed Methodology**.

Youth experiencing homelessness, particularly those who are unaccompanied or who have run away from home, face numerous legal and systemic barriers that complicate or prevent their access to critical supports and services like shelter, medical care, public benefits, and education. Increasing access to these community resources will move us toward preventing and ending intergenerational cycles of homelessness and poverty.

Laws, policies, and systems vary from state to state but can provide important protections and benefits for young people experiencing homelessness—making the exit from homelessness easier and faster and the time spent experiencing homelessness safer. For example, states that have reduced or no legal and systemic barriers to critical support for unaccompanied minors scored higher because resources for youth experiencing homelessness not only exist but are accessible to all who need the assistance.

Alternatively, state laws and policies can impose punishments, and systems and environmental factors can create barriers that make it more difficult to exit homelessness and make youth less safe while experiencing homelessness.

The Index divides metrics into Law & Policy, Systems, and Environment sections, with the Law & Policy section further broken into 5 major categories. Below, each of these categories and subcategories are listed along with the metrics that fall within them. Additionally, in some of these categories, the report highlights states that are ahead of the curve compared to the rest, but not all categories have such a state to highlight.

Law and Policy

The state has comprehensive laws, policies, and regulations ensuring supports & services for youth experiencing homelessness.

Perfect scores: None

Honorable mentions (11/12):

California, District of Columbia, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, Oregon, Washington

Lowest marks:

Montana (3/12), Arkansas (4/12), Pennsylvania (4/12), Wisconsin (4/12), Wyoming (4/12)

Scored Metrics:

- The state includes a specific definition of the term “youth.” [1 point]
- The state defines the term “runaway.” [1 point]
- The state explicitly defines the terms “homeless child,” “homeless youth,” “homeless minor,” or “homeless student.” [1 point]
- **The state establishes the age of childhood as encompassing persons older than 18 (outside of a “homeless youth” definition, but includes youth in jurisdiction of child welfare or juvenile court). [4 points]**
- The state defines “sex” and/or “gender” which includes gender identity within its RHYA State licensing agency regulations. [1 point]
- **The state has a state Runaway & Homeless Youth Act. [4 points]**

Total Possible Points: 12

Key Recommendations:

Enacting comprehensive laws that provide a significant level of prevention, identification, and early intervention services, including drop-in centers, street outreach, community programs, coordinated entry and assessment (emergency/crisis response, shelters, host homes, transitional housing), or tailored housing solutions (non-time limited affordable housing, short-term assistance, etc.) specifically for unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness with a corresponding appropriation. Such a state law, sufficiently funded and working in tandem with funding provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S.

Department of Housing and Urban Development on the federal level will provide the necessary infrastructure and resources to address and end youth homelessness.

Recognizing youth experiencing homelessness in state laws, policies, and regulations. Key definitions need to be adopted, and they, along with other relevant laws and policies need to be more inclusive, developmentally and culturally appropriate, non-judgmental, and youth-centric in order to support and end youth homelessness for all who seek publicly-funded services.

- » States should establish a definition of “youth” that is distinct from “child;”
- » Eligibility for publicly-funded opportunities and support available to children and youth should be extended to include young adults through age 24; this will especially support homeless youth interested in post-secondary education
- » The terms “runaway youth,” “homeless youth,” and “runaway child” should be specifically defined in appropriate civil statutes (and excluded from criminal statutes), using the definition of homelessness found in the education subtitle of the federal McKinney-Vento Act.¹

Example:

Jorge lives in a state with a Runaway and Homeless Youth Act which licenses and funds several programs that work directly with young people experiencing homelessness to reunite them with supportive adults in their families, or when that’s not possible, to provide housing and services that keep youth safe and on track to reach their full potential. Jorge was raised by a single father, and as Jorge got older, he and his dad increasingly experienced conflict in the home.

One day, in the heat of a particularly difficult fight between Jorge and his dad about college, his dad kicked him out of the house. Jorge called his friend Alex to see if he could stay with him, but his parents weren’t okay with taking him in. Alex had heard about a hotline that was specifically for young people who didn’t have anywhere to stay. He looked up the number online and told him to call. The volunteer on the other end of the hotline asked Jorge a few questions about where in the state he was located, his age, and whether he was safe. He then gave Jorge the address of an emergency shelter specifically for youth and young adults under the age of 24 that was nearby.

Jorge stayed at the shelter for a couple of weeks. One of the program’s social workers worked with him to figure out whether there was another family member he could stay with. When Jorge suggested that maybe his aunt would be okay with having him stay at her house, the social worker called her and arranged a meeting to discuss. Jorge ended up moving in with his aunt, and the program even convinced his dad to consider seeing a family counselor to help them better manage conflict so that Jorge could eventually move home.

¹ 42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.

State Spotlight

Minnesota's Homeless Youth Act² is a good example of a state law that attempts to authorize and fund a wide range of services aimed to address and prevent homelessness among youth and young adults. While the original act was passed into law by Minnesota's legislature in 2006, advocates and lawmakers have worked together several times since then to update the law, and to increase its funding, to better ensure young people can access the services it outlines. In this, Minnesota provides an example for states to look to for their own Runaway and Homeless Youth Acts, both in the content of the law, and in the approach to it as a living document, requiring tending and updating as new information surfaces that indicates shifting or expanding needs.

While the experience of being kicked out was stressful—even traumatic—for Jorge, the program, which received funding and support from the state's Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, was able to ensure that he didn't experience major disruption to his housing or education. In the several years since, Jorge has not experienced any recurring incidents of homelessness.

Youth's contact with the criminal and juvenile legal systems are limited/prevented.

Perfect scores (21/21): None

Honorable mentions:

Maine (18/21), Massachusetts (18/21), Louisiana (17/21), New York (17/21)

Lowest marks:

Idaho (4/21), West Virginia (5/21)

Scored Metrics:

- The state has a "Child in Need of Supervision" (CHINS) related statute. [1 point]
- The state prohibits mingling of CHINS youth taken into custody with delinquent youth. [1 point]
- The state provides opportunities for CHINS to receive diversion services without court involvement. [1 point]
- The state does not explicitly authorize courts to force CHINS to pay fines and/or restitution. [1 point]
- The state does not explicitly authorize courts to force CHINS to undergo drug screening. [1 point]
- The state does not explicitly authorize courts to force CHINS to relinquish their driver's license or suspend driving privileges. [1 point]
- The state allows unaccompanied homeless youth to request services independently under CHINS. [1 point]
- **The state does not consider runaway youth as delinquent or a status offender. [4 points]**
- The state does not explicitly allow police to take runaway youth into custody. [1 point]

- The state does not explicitly allow runaway and homeless youth to be detained in secure facilities. [1 point]
- Truant youth are not classified as status offenders or delinquents. [1 point]
- The state does not have curfew laws. [1 point]
- The state does not criminalize harboring a runaway youth or concealing a minor. [1 point]
- The state does not criminalize interfering with custodial rights. [1 point]
- **The state allows shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements. [4 points]**

Total Possible Points: 21

Key Recommendations:

Preventing and limiting youth experiencing homelessness contact with the criminal and juvenile legal systems and connecting them to critical supports and services. Punitive approaches to unaccompanied youth should be avoided and court involvement minimized. Court sanctions such as fines, fees, drug screening, and suspended driving privileges increase the probability of more court involvement. Rather than punishing youth, states should provide them with the opportunity to access diversionary support and services. The juvenile legal system should not be used for providing youth services related to housing or homelessness when a youth has committed no crime and there is no other reason for a youth to interact with the juvenile legal system.

Youths' safety should be the paramount concern. States should rely less on law enforcement and more on service providers to address the needs of youth experiencing homelessness. Unnecessary interactions with police could lead to trauma and avoidable entanglement with the criminal legal system. Youth should only be taken into custody in limited circumstances and with their consent, or if they are in immediate physical danger. States should adopt more nuanced policies that cover youth experiencing homelessness in different circumstances, including those who are on their own and those in families that need services. At no point should law enforcement or any entity force youth to return home against their will as this could put them at an even greater risk of harm.

Service providers, "Good Samaritans," and other professionals should be protected from civil or criminal liability when they render medical care or service in good faith to unaccompanied youth. Punishing trusted individuals who support unaccompanied youth can further isolate youth and keep them from achieving stability. Communities should instead prioritize maintaining trust with youth experiencing homelessness rather than punish them or their care-takers.

² Minnesota Statute § 256K.45

Policy Priority:

Ending the Criminalization of Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Proactively working toward ending the criminalization of youth experiencing homelessness will prevent harmful criminal records that could impede future career goals and housing stability. Advocates in the following states can take action towards ending the criminalization of youth experiencing homelessness.

- The following states curfew laws should be repealed: **Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia**
- Curfews should be eliminated as it does not promote safety to punish youth for surviving unsheltered. Jurisdictions should instead ensure they provide sufficient safe shelter and independent living programs so that unaccompanied youth and young adults do not have to live in public places in violation of curfew laws.
- These states consider runaway youth as delinquent or a status offender: **California, Vermont, North Dakota, Maryland, Idaho [Metric 14]**
- Truant youth are classified as status offenders or delinquents in the following states: **Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia [Metric 17]**
Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia [Metric 17]
- Status offenses are behaviors or actions that are legal for adults but punishable by law when performed by legal minors, under the age of 18 like truancy, curfew laws, or running away from home. Status offenses criminally punish children for normal adolescent behavior and for homeless youth, it punishes them for being unhoused. Status offending youth may be ordered sanctions such as probation or out-of-home placement. Introducing youth to the juvenile criminal legal system for this reason is cruel and does not serve the needs of youth. States should instead remove status offenses from the juvenile legal system and focus on care and support for youth.

We hope to support this priority in the future by also looking at the disproportionate impact status offenses have on Black youth and youth of color.

Example:

Simone is a 16-year-old experiencing unsheltered homelessness after being kicked out of her home. She linked up with a few other young people her age who were also staying outside, and together they worked to find relatively safe places to sleep downtown each night. She'd been working in a fast food job part-time and was trying to save money to pay rent to a family friend who agreed to house her in the future if she was able to contribute financially. Recently, there were several nights of major protests in her city related to police abuse of a teenager who'd been taken into custody the week before and seriously injured by officers. Most of the protesters were young people, so the city decided to enforce the state curfew of 10:00pm for anyone under the age of 18 in an attempt to shut down the protests.

Simone and her friends were sleeping on the other side of downtown when police raided their camp, taking Simone and two others into custody for curfew violations. Unlike most of the protesters who'd been picked up for curfew violations as well, Simone didn't have parents to call to come pick her up from the curfew center. After answering the on-site social worker's questions, she was dropped off at an emergency shelter. Simone didn't go inside because she'd stayed at the shelter previously and felt unsafe, which she'd tried to communicate to the social worker at the curfew site. Instead, she waited for the police officers to drive away and then went to find her friends. A few weeks later, Simone was picked up a second time by the police for violating curfew. This time, she was assessed a \$500 fine. After paying the fine, Simone was back to having no money to pay rent to her family friend. She had to start over completely, and as a result, she would be unsheltered for several more weeks while she tried to save money from her job again.

Advocacy Opportunity: Limiting Unnecessary Police Interactions with Youth Experiencing Homelessness

- » **These states still allow police to take runaway youth into custody:** Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming [Metric 15]
- » **These states allow runaway and homeless youth to be detained in secure facilities (detention):** Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Nebraska, North Carolina, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin [Metric 16]

On the Intersection of Youth Homelessness and Policing:

Beyond status offenses specifically targeting youth, in recent years, there's been a marked increase in rhetoric in media and government in support of policing as a policy response to homelessness generally. Historically, these policies have flourished on the municipal level, but new efforts to extend the criminalization of homelessness into state policy have begun to surface. In the summer of 2021, Governor Greg Abbott (R-Texas) signed a new law banning all public encampments across the state of Texas³ and threatened communities that do not enforce this law with loss of state funding. Similar bills were also introduced in Arizona and Georgia. These sorts of policies were recently documented for the first time in the National Homelessness Law Center's [Housing Not Handcuffs 2021 State Law Supplement](#).

They aren't currently tracked in the Index, but it would be wrong to assume that the populations targeted by these kinds of laws don't include among them youth and young adults. LGBTQ+ and BIPOC youth and young adults experiencing homelessness in particular are more likely to be unsheltered than their white, straight, and cisgender peers. So while our traditional measures of policies either creating or diminishing the distance between young people experiencing homelessness and policing focus on the juvenile legal system and youth-specific offenses like truancy or running away, the tendrils of the adult criminal legal system reach young people with increasing frequency. We hope to see this recent trend reversed, since the criminal legal system only creates harm among people experiencing homelessness.

Maine does not have any statewide laws criminalizing status offenses and does not approach its *Children In Need of Services* with punitive policies like drug testing or driver's license suspension. This creates an atmosphere where youth experiencing homelessness can seek out police assistance if they have need for their own safety with less fear of reprisal or being taken into custody.

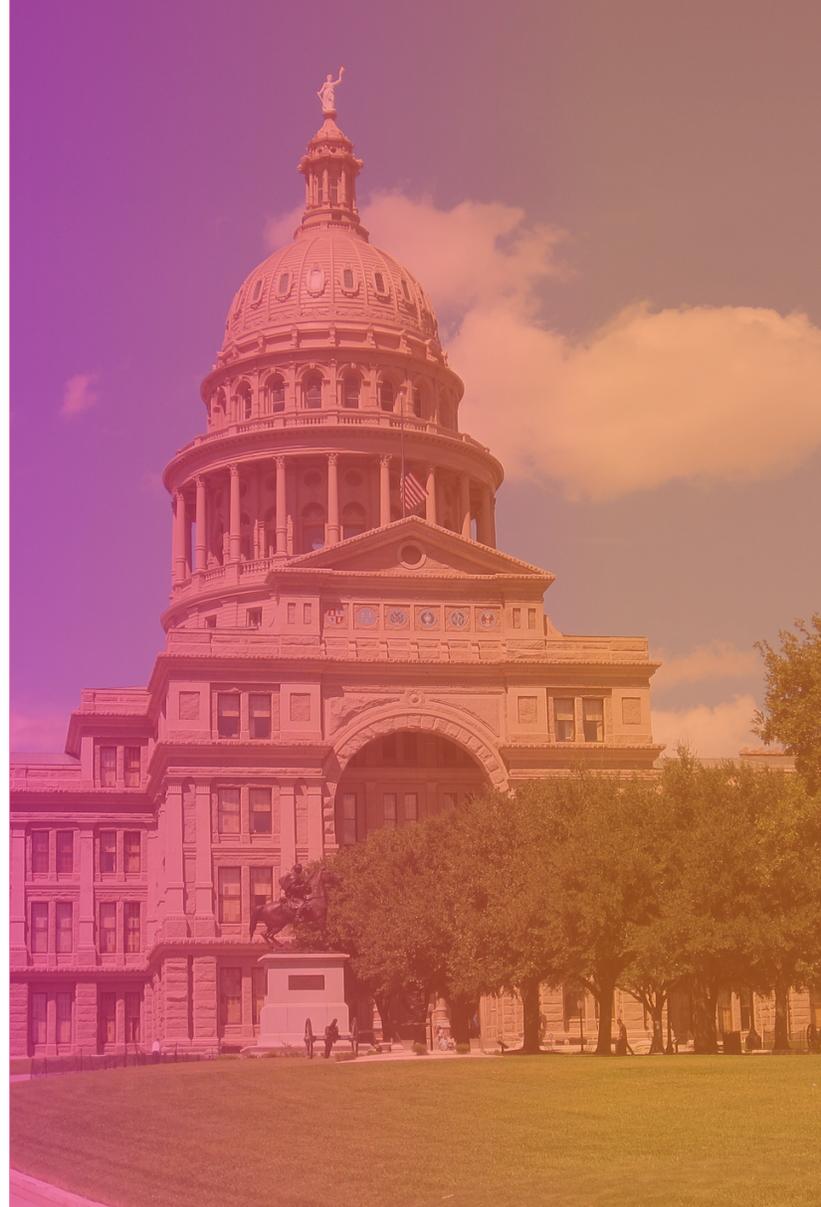
³ <https://www.texastribune.org/2021/05/20/texas-homeless-camps-ban-legislature/>

The state provides unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently.

Scored Metrics:

- The state has an established process for emancipation. [1 point]
- The state recognizes emancipation in limited circumstances. [1 point]
- The state can waive or not require parental consent for emancipation. [1 point]
- The state has no age restrictions for emancipation. [1 point]
- **The state gives minors contract rights OR allows them to enter into binding contracts for certain purposes (e.g. necessities). [4 points]**

Total Possible Points: 8



Perfect scores (8/8):

Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Tennessee

Lowest marks (5/8):

Maryland, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio

Key Recommendations:

Legally permitting unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness to live on their own if reunification with family or appointment of a guardian is not feasible or is not appropriate.

Barriers to emancipation, such as blanket minimum age restrictions or parental consent without exceptions, should be reviewed, revised, and in most cases, repealed.

States should consider establishing emancipation procedures to remove minimum age restrictions in favor of individualized assessments of each youth's ability and need to live independently. Emancipation procedures should permit courts the maximum flexibility to grant emancipation according to the best interests of the youth. Likewise, youth should be allowed to initiate the

procedures independently and should not have to obtain parental consent.

- » In some cases, neglectful or abusive parents may withhold consent to punish their children. The law should not permit such a harmful outcome, as emancipation may be essential for youth to live independently.
- » Procedural safeguards should be in place to ensure the process is fair and accessible to youth and to prevent abuse of the process by parents.
- » In cases of extreme family conflict, it can be advantageous for youth to become emancipated from their parents. Emancipation can ensure that financial benefits to which a youth is entitled go directly to a youth who is managing their own care, rather than to parents or guardians.

On Unaccompanied and Undocumented Youth:

All young people experiencing homelessness should have the same access to public support and services regardless of their immigration status. In California, they have their own state run Unaccompanied Refugee Minors program⁴ where they provide case management, education and housing support, and access to medical care to select undocumented unaccompanied minors based on their criteria. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Immigration Services Bureau allocated \$2,898,000 to fund legal services to undocumented unaccompanied minors in cases involving asylum, T-Visa, U-Visa, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) and other legal issues related to immigration. We hope other states, especially those with a high amount of undocumented young people experiencing homelessness, consider offering similar programming and recognize offering legal support for pathways to citizenship is critical to end homelessness for this population of young people.

⁴ See: <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/refugees/subprograms-and-info/urm>

Example:

Keisha is a 17-year-old high school junior. She works after school and on the weekends at a movie theater, where she makes a living wage and gets near-full-time hours. She's been trying to save up money to move out of her mom's house. Her mom struggles with substance use, and being around her while she's using has been creating enormous amounts of stress for Keisha. Keisha has talked to her mom about moving out, but her mom is codependent and doesn't want to allow her to leave. Unfortunately, she also knows that her mom has been pulling money out of Keisha's bank account to support her substance use whenever she's low on cash. Keisha decided to look into emancipation, since legally emancipating would mean that she no longer needs her mom's consent to move out and would protect her financially from her mom raiding her bank account. She consulted an attorney at a children's rights nonprofit and learned that in her state, she could probably get emancipated without her mom's consent as long as she can prove to a judge that she can care for herself.

The attorney helped her prepare and file the correct paperwork, and Keisha successfully demonstrated to the judge that she was mature enough and had the right support and resources to be able to live independently. Her emancipation was granted, and Keisha moved into an apartment with an older cousin. The process took longer than she would have liked, but she felt relieved that it was finally over. Keisha had decided that if emancipation didn't work out, she was probably going to run away from home and try to live independently without the legal protections that come with emancipation. It would have been much harder, and she's not sure how it would have worked out, but she knew she needed to get out of her mom's house.

The state addresses the educational needs of youth experiencing homelessness.

Scored Metrics:

- The state's dispute resolution process has been amended to reflect ESSA's changes to McKinney-Vento. [1 point]
- **The state explicitly allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations. [4 points]**
- The state has laws or regulations that promote access to higher education for homeless youth. [1 point]

Total Possible Points: 6

Perfect scores (6/6): Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Missouri, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Washington

Lowest marks (1/6):

Arkansas, Michigan, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming

Key Recommendations:

Complying with the federal requirements to ensure access to education for youth experiencing homelessness. Communities should work with schools to ensure youth experiencing homelessness have access to safe, adequate, and appropriate transportation and that school policies accommodate the needs of these students.

- » The federal McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program, updated by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, requires states to meet the educational needs of youth experiencing homelessness. States must ensure proper implementation of the law in order to ensure homeless youth do not experience any barriers to accessing free, appropriate public education. Under the 2015 amendments, states must adopt statutes or regulations to improve access to education for youth experiencing homelessness.
- » States should implement a robust dispute resolution process that would protect the education rights of students experiencing homelessness and allow them and their families to appeal negative decisions should there be a dispute in regards to eligibility, school placement, or enrollment. States also should find ways to help homeless youth stay and succeed in school, including permitting them to accrue credits for work previously done in another school and promoting access to postsecondary education.

Policy Priority:

Advancing Access to Higher Education for Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Only **Nebraska** and **Mississippi** do not provide tuition waivers for foster youth [Metric 49 - see Systems]

Only 14 states, Arkansas, Iowa, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, West Virginia, Wyoming, **do not have laws or regulations that promote access to higher education for homeless youth.** [Metric 29]

Some states like Maryland, Florida, and Georgia have advanced a wide range of policies to support access to tuition-free public college, housing supports for young people and their families, and other accommodations that can make it more likely that a young person experiencing homelessness can continue their education. In Maryland, unaccompanied homeless youth and young people in foster care are exempt from paying tuition at public institutions of higher education, if the young person is enrolled as a candidate for a vocational certification, associate's degree or bachelor's degree prior to turning 25 years old, and has applied for federal and state financial aid. The exemption lasts for five years or until the student receives a bachelor's degree, whichever comes first.

Advocates should strive to achieve a community where youth experiencing homelessness do not have any financial or systemic barriers to higher education. The following section scores the accessibility of critical public benefits supports and services to youth experiencing homelessness. While advocating for access to higher education for youth experiencing homelessness we must also uplift the need to improve the systems that support youth like access to food, affordable housing, and the ability to consent to medical care. Currently only 8 states, **Arizona, California, District of Columbia,**

Addressing the Educational Needs of Youth Experiencing Homelessness:

The Index currently only measures three policies under this section, two worth one point each and a third weighted higher at four points. Five of the six total points (two metrics) can be earned by any state that's currently in compliance with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, which included a number of provisions specifically designed to address educational accessibility among youth experiencing homelessness. Those policies should be findable in the ESSA plan each state is required to publish. If a state isn't earning at least five points, the conclusion is that either the state's ESSA plan doesn't spell out how they intend to follow those provisions of federal law or the state's ESSA plan isn't easily available to the public. Either of these would be problematic for students experiencing homelessness and the family members and teachers working to support them in attaining their education.

Florida, Hawaii, Indiana, Michigan and Nebraska explicitly allow homeless youth to use SNAP to buy hot restaurant meals or prepared meals. Ensuring homeless youth have access to hot meals while continuing their education is a small but impactful way to support them succeeding in those programs. [Metric 44]

Example:

Khalid is a high school senior whose family was recently evicted from their apartment. It's the middle of the fall semester, and he's getting ready to apply to colleges. His family moves into his aunt's house while they figure out what to do next, but it's far away from his school and neither of his parents have a car. Khalid misses a week of school, and when the school principal calls his mom, she shares with him what's been going on at home. The principal immediately connects her to Khalid's school's McKinney-Vento liaison, who is able to get Khalid a spot on a school bus that will bring him from his new neighborhood to school so that he won't miss any more classes. The liaison is also able to work with Khalid's mom to get them on a waiting list for rapid re-housing, and within a few short weeks, the family is in their new apartment near Khalid's school.

The state allows youth experiencing homelessness to access critical public benefit supports and services.

Scored Metrics:

- **The state explicitly allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage (without parental consent). [4 points]**
- The state allows unaccompanied youth to consent to mental health treatment (without parental consent). [1 point]
- The state allows minors to consent to non-residential treatment for substance use (without parental consent). [1 point]
- The state explicitly allows minors to consent to the diagnosis and treatment of STIs (without parental consent). [1 point]
- The state allows minors, regardless of their legal status, to consent to examination and treatment relating to a sexual assault (without parental consent). [1 point]
- The state has transition planning for children exiting the juvenile legal system. [1 point]
- The transitional planning specifically addresses housing needs. [1 point]
- The state addresses custody after discharge from the juvenile legal system. [1 point]
- The state requires permanency planning for committed adjudicated youth. [1 point]
- The state provides transportation home after discharge from the juvenile legal system. [1 point]
- The state subsidizes child care for eligible minors when employment or school is required under the TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) program. [1 point]
- The state has exemptions from TANF's family living and/or work/education requirements. [1 point]
- State provides cash incentives for youth who graduate high school or earn a GED. [1 point]
- TANF recipients are categorically eligible for the SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance) program. [1 point]
- The state explicitly allows homeless youth to use SNAP to buy hot restaurant meals or prepared meals. [1 point]

Total Possible Points: 18

Key Recommendations:

Removing barriers facing youth experiencing homelessness in accessing critical supports and services. States should authorize or require the provision of healthcare, education, and other needed public benefit supports and services to youth experiencing

homelessness in cases where obtaining parental consent is not possible or necessary. In addition to financial barriers that may exist and obstacles associated with confidentiality of services, homeless youth should be given authority to consent for their own care. Youth should be able to access care and services for health conditions, without the significant deterrent of parental consent and notification requirements.

States should ensure discharge-planning and aftercare procedures are in place for youth in juvenile detention facilities so that they are not at risk of experiencing homelessness upon release. Youth should not be released into unsafe or temporary living situations that could lead to homelessness; states should focus on appropriate release procedures that include adequate support and services that foster reintegration of youth discharged from the juvenile legal system. Combating youth homelessness upon release can benefit youth who are at-risk of displacement and also reduce rates of youth re-entering juvenile legal systems.

State laws, policies, and regulations implementing federal public benefits such as SNAP and TANF should provide exemptions to their eligibility and retention requirements that account for the precarious circumstances of youth experiencing homelessness. Reducing and eliminating barriers to food and financial support will enable youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to grow and reach financial and housing stability.

Perfect Scores (18/18): None

Honorable Mentions: District of Columbia (17/18), California (16/18), Kentucky (16/18)

Lowest Marks: Rhode Island (6/18), Alaska (7/18), Arkansas (7/18), Minnesota (7/18), North Dakota (7/18), South Dakota (7/18)

Example 1:

Josh is a 19-year-old receiving case management services from a homeless shelter and working on getting enrolled back in school. One of the program requirements is that all of its residents apply for SNAP benefits, also known as food stamps. Josh is excited to get his SNAP card so that he can start to buy food that he likes better than what's served at the shelter cafeteria. After the weeks-long processing time, phone interview, and final checks, Josh finally receives his card in the mail. He takes it the next day to the store and quickly learns that he can only use it to purchase food that has to be cooked. Josh doesn't have a kitchen, so he can't cook or refrigerate food items, and he's frustrated that after going through the lengthy process to receive benefits, he can only buy snacks like chips or cookies. A few months later, Josh gets a letter from the SNAP office announcing that they're starting a program where people experiencing homelessness, elders, and people with disabilities can use their SNAP benefits to buy hot and prepared foods. Finally, Josh can buy healthier food items from the grocery store that he doesn't have to store or cook.

Example 2:

Alexis is a 17-year-old in a state that doesn't allow minors to consent to their own health care. She has symptoms of a common STI and went to a health clinic to try to get treatment, but they turned her away because she was a minor and not accompanied by a parent or guardian. She learned in school about STIs and how some of them can be dangerous if left untreated, but she's afraid to tell her parents about her symptoms because they don't know that she's sexually active and her dad once said that if he found out she was, she'd be kicked out of the house. Alexis does her best to control the symptoms with over-the-counter pain medicines and hopes that they'll go away, but unfortunately, they only get worse. Eventually, she discloses what she's been experiencing to her mom and asks her to take her to the doctor. At the appointment, Alexis and her mom learn that because the STI went untreated for so long, she has pelvic inflammatory disease and could experience life-long complications as a result.

Systems

Perfect Scores (18/18): Kentucky, Washington, Wisconsin

Honorable Mentions (17/18): District of Columbia, Massachusetts

Lowest Marks: Arkansas (2/18), Kansas (3/18), Mississippi (3/18), Alabama (4/18), Arizona (4/18), Indiana (4/18), Iowa (4/18), Virginia (4/18)

Scored Metrics

- **There is a current state plan to end homelessness.** [4 points]
- **The state plan has a “youth” component.** [4 points]
- The state plan has a LGBT youth component. [1 point]
- **There is a state entity (Office of homeless youth services, homeless youth state coordinator, commission on homeless youth, etc.) that focuses solely on youth homelessness.** [4 points]
- The state provides tuition waivers for foster youth. [1 point]
- The State Department of Transportation has systems in place to address proof of residency requirements to receive a state-issued identification card. [1 point]
- The state does NOT require parental consent for youth to obtain a state-issued identification card. [1 point]
- There is a state interagency council on homelessness. [1 point]
- A statewide housing needs assessment that identifies groups at greatest risk for homelessness has been implemented. [1 point]

Total Possible Points: 18

State Spotlight:

Wisconsin’s current state plan to end homelessness⁷ explicitly names addressing homelessness among youth and young adults as a key priority, highlighting specific strategies providers should undertake themselves to connect young people to the appropriate resources and recommending the state legislature enact specific policy changes to benefit young people experiencing homelessness, including allowing 16 and 17-year-olds to enter into housing contracts, addressing the postsecondary educational needs of young people experiencing homelessness, and exploring emerging strategies in addressing homelessness among rural youth in particular.

Key Recommendations

Creating a state entity—such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services, Homeless Youth State Coordinator, or a Commissioner on Youth Homelessness, etc.—that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

By creating this kind of state entity, public officials can ensure that there is adequate capacity, subject-matter expertise, and prioritization of youth services necessary to make a significant impact.

Creating and appointing a State Interagency Council on

Homelessness, similar to the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, to convene state agencies to develop and carry out a multi-sectoral approach to preventing and ending youth homelessness, consistent with the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness’s (USICH) criteria and benchmarks for ending youth homelessness.⁵

- For those states interested in implementing an Interagency Council on Homelessness, the USICH has provided a step-by-step guide for developing a council.⁶

⁵ United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2018, February). Criteria and Benchmarks for Achieving the Goal of Ending Youth Homelessness. Retrieved from: https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Youth-Criteria-and-Benchmarks-revised-Feb-2018.pdf

⁶ United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, Developing a State Interagency Council on Homelessness: A Step-by-Step Guide. https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/pptsich.pdf

⁷ Wisconsin Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2019). A Hand and a Home: Foundations for Success 2019-2022 Statewide Action Plan. Retrieved from: https://doa.wi.gov/Documents/A%20Hand%20and%20a%20Home_WICH%20Statewide%20Plan.pdf

Environment

Perfect scores (17/17): California, District of Columbia

Lowest Marks (0/17): Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Wyoming

Scored Metrics

- **The state maintains a community advisory board for youth that informs youth homelessness policy. [4 points]**
- Ending youth homelessness is a goal at the Executive branch (Governor). [1 point]
- **The state requires training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems. [4 points]**
- The state has a public awareness campaign/common messaging for local awareness campaigns for youth homelessness. [1 point]
- **The state establishes protected class status based on one's sexual orientation and gender identity for runaway and homeless youth programs. [4 points]**
- The state establishes protected class status based on one's sexual orientation and gender identity for juvenile legal programs. [1 point]
- The state establishes protected class status based on one's sexual orientation and gender identity for child welfare programs. [1 point]
- Conversion therapy for minors on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression is banned. [1 point]

Total Possible Points: 17

Key Recommendations

Organizing and maintaining a self-governing youth action council—including significant representation of youth who are currently experiencing homelessness or who have experienced homelessness in the recent past—to inform youth homelessness policy within the state.

Providing protections against discrimination for youth who are seeking services, implementing policies that ban controversial and ineffective services for LGBTQ youth such as conversion therapy, and creating a statewide strategy to prevent and end youth homelessness that is inclusive of LGBTQ youth. Such strategy should also include explicit prohibition on discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in state statutes and regulations specific to child welfare, juvenile legal, and runaway and homeless youth systems. Increasing access and trust in these services for LGBTQ youth is critical to support ending youth homelessness.

Example:

Riley is a 16-year-old gender nonconforming high school sophomore. At home, Riley is careful to dress in clothing that matches their gender assigned at birth because they've heard their parents make disparaging comments about LGBTQ+ people. At school, Riley is mostly supported by their friends and teachers, and they often change into clothes that more authentically represent their gender identity before classes start in the morning. One day, Riley has a substitute teacher in one of their classes who asks them to stay after to talk. He asks Riley why they're wearing clothes that he thinks don't match Riley's gender and Riley explains that they identify as nonbinary and use they/them pronouns. This teacher calls Riley's parents that night and relays that information directly to them. Within a week, Riley's parents have pulled them out of school and sent them to a remote boarding school that uses so-called "conversion therapy" to try to change the sexual orientations and gender identities of its students. Riley's mental health deteriorates due to the trauma of the practices employed by the school, but they do their best to try to convince the adults who run the program that they're not trans. When the program says that Riley can go home, Riley feels that they're not safe in their parents home anymore. Shortly after arriving home, Riley runs away from home, hitchhiking to a nearby city where they stay outside until they learn about a housing program for LGBTQ+ youth where they can receive services while being affirmed in their identity.

The Deteriorating Policy Environment for Transgender Youth:

Since the publication of the 2020 Index, dangerous and alarming shifts have occurred in state policymaking trends with regards to transgender and gender nonconforming young people, most of which have serious implications for their long-term housing outcomes. On March 29, 2021, the Arkansas State Legislature passed a bill which Governor Asa Hutchinson would later sign into law criminalizing the provision of transition-related healthcare to minors. More recently in Texas, executive branch officials have issued legal opinion that would define the provision of this care as child abuse, creating new mandatory reporting requirements for education and health care personnel to report transgender children to the child welfare system for investigation of their parents and the possible removal of trans children and youth from their homes; advocates can take action here to support trans youth in Texas. A number of states have debated similar laws in the past year, and the individuals and organizations responsible for pushing these proposals have also successfully moved bills in several states that prohibit trans youth from playing school sports, alienating them from their peers and violating their rights to an equal education under Title IX of the federal Education Amendments of 1972. These developments are new enough not to be scored in the current iteration of the Index, but states that adopt such policies should expect to see their scores drop when the 2022 Index is released. Trans youth in particular are disproportionately represented among young people experiencing homelessness and any policy which places them in increasingly hostile social or family environments increases their risk of housing insecurity.

Appendix A: Detailed Methodology

Each state was evaluated on metrics and recommendations listed in the Index. Out of a possible 100 points, over half (52%) of the points were distributed across the following 13 key metrics, which are indicative of states' overall approaches toward youth homelessness:

1. The state establishes the age of childhood as encompassing persons older than 18 (outside of a "homeless youth" definition, but includes youth in jurisdiction of child welfare or juvenile court).
2. The state has a Runaway & Homeless Youth Act—or similar legislation—with corresponding funding.
3. Youth experiencing homelessness have partial or full contract rights.
4. Running away is declassified as a status or delinquent offense.
5. The state allows shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
6. The state explicitly allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth.
7. Unaccompanied youth under 18 can apply for health insurance coverage on their own.
8. There is a state entity (office of homeless youth services, homeless youth state coordinator, commission on homeless youth, etc.) that focuses solely on youth homelessness.
9. There is a current state plan to end homelessness.
10. The current state plan to end homelessness includes a "youth" component with youth-specific strategies.
11. The state maintains a self-governing youth action council—including significant representation of youth currently experiencing homelessness or who have experienced homelessness in the past—to inform youth homelessness policy within the state.
12. The state requires training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual, development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems
13. The state establishes protected class status based on one's sexual orientation and gender identity for runaway and homeless youth programs.

These recommendations are critical to effectively addressing youth homelessness on the state level. How states perform on each of these metrics is indicative on a broader scale of how their laws, policies, systems, and environments treat youth experiencing homelessness. The remaining metrics, grouped by law and policy, systems, and environment, were weighted equally. Detailed explanations of the metrics are included in the following sections. Additional metrics may be included in future iterations as states make progress on tackling youth homelessness, in order to better evaluate each state's commitment to preventing and ending youth homelessness.

The Index does not examine state practices and how they implement laws and policies. Many states that have employed innovative models and approaches to address youth homelessness are not fully captured in the Index. The Index also does not address or measure the pace of advocacy efforts over time. Some states that may not have performed well in the Index but have ramped up efforts to address youth homelessness should not be discouraged. Even though these dynamics are outside the scope of the Index, states should continue to pursue these efforts.

Additionally, there may be cases where a state has a specific policy in place, but does not earn points for it. Circumstances under which this may occur include (1) if the state follows a policy directive that is not codified in regulation or law or is otherwise not easily available to researchers and (2) if the state meets only part of a metric, e.g. sexual orientation included as a protected class in child welfare, but not gender identity.

The metrics are researched first by a team of pro-bono attorneys, who scour state statutes, regulations, and plans for relevant information. After this first round of research, initial findings are sent out to key stakeholders in each state for review, feedback, and corrections. If you're interested in reviewing the findings in your state next year for accuracy ahead of the publication of the 2022 State Index on Youth Homelessness, you can join the State Advocates Network by visiting YouthStateIndex.com.

Appendix B: State Scorecards

Note on State Scorecards:

On the following pages are scorecards for each individual state, indicating the state's scores, explanations of strengths and weaknesses, and recommendations for improving in the future. They are intended to be taken as handouts for advocates to provide policymakers with a quick reference to a state's performance on youth homelessness and how it can be efficiently and effectively improved.

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Alabama

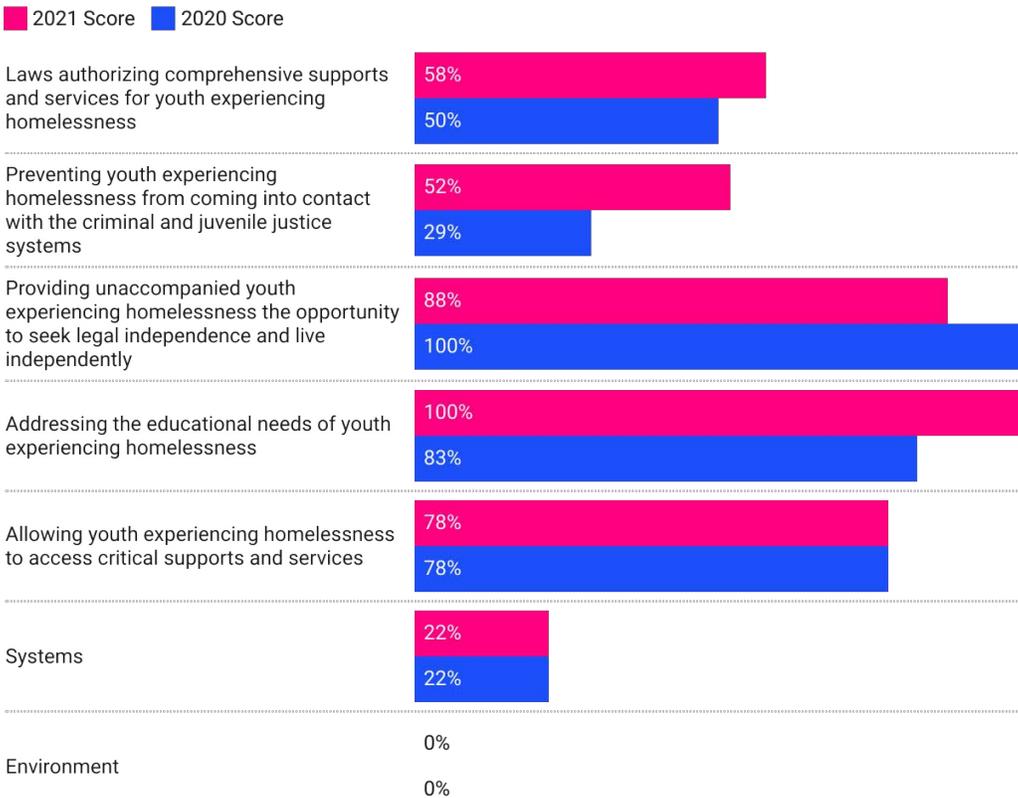
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:
33

Overall score 2021:

49

Overall score 2020:

43

State Highlights

Recommendations
for Improvement

Overview

Alabama has moved the needle relative to other states in addressing the educational needs of youth experiencing homelessness and providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently.



There is room for significant improvement throughout the metrics for the Yellowhammer State across all categories. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness, crafting statewide plans to address homelessness that contains a youth-specific component, designating agencies to develop and enforce these plans, and protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- The state has extended foster care to age 21 and allows young adults under 21 to opt back into services after exiting if needed.
- The state explicitly allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
- The state explicitly allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage (without parental consent).
- The state does not consider runaway youth as delinquent or a status offender.



- Enact and fund a state law similar to the federal RHYA to provide key intervention and emergency services for youth experiencing homelessness.
- Enact a state law which allows shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- Enact a law which gives minors the right to enter into contracts for certain purposes (e.g. necessities).
- Allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage on their own.

Systems

- Youth are able to obtain state-issued identification cards without parental consent in certain circumstances.



- Create a comprehensive statewide plan to end homelessness that includes a strategy to prevent and end youth homelessness and LGBTQ youth homelessness.
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.
- Create an Interagency Council on Homelessness that mirrors the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), providing a multi-sector approach to preventing and ending youth homelessness.

Environment

- None.



- Organize and maintain a self-governing youth action board or council to inform youth homelessness policy within the state.
- Require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in runaway and homeless youth systems.
- Promote safe and inclusive environments in child welfare, juvenile justice, and runaway and homeless youth programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Ban harmful and ineffective service provision that includes conversion therapy.

Alaska

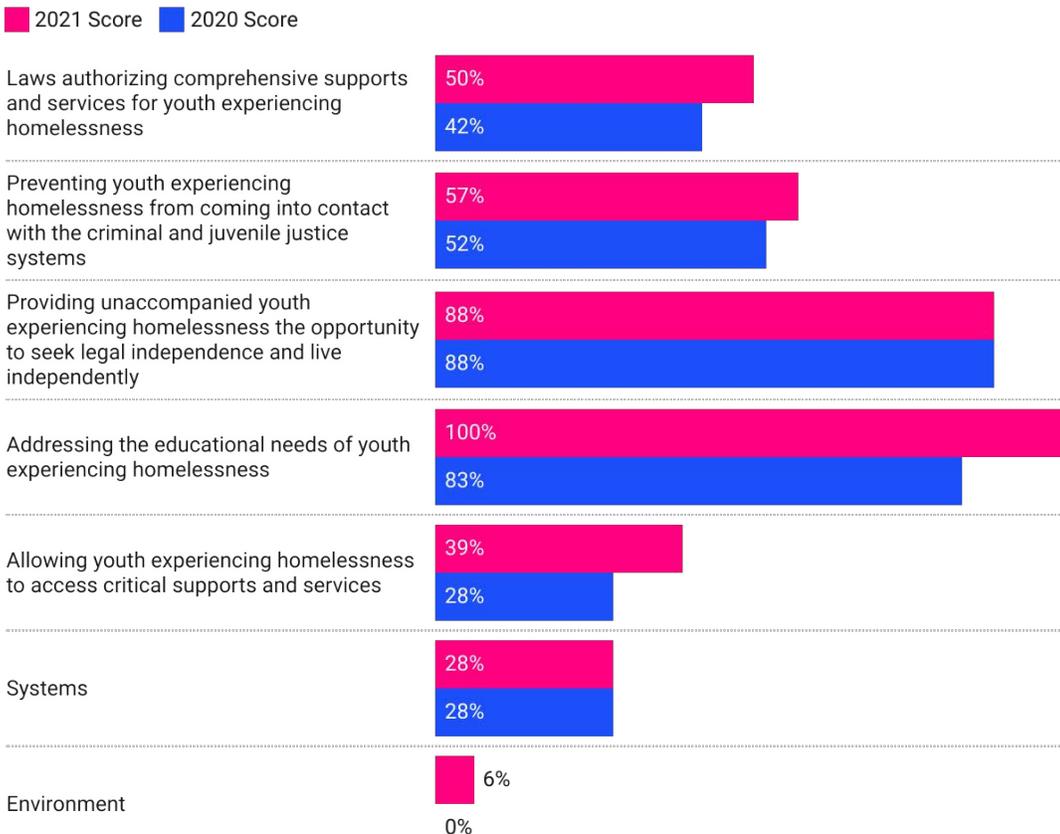
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

45

Overall score 2021:

44

Overall score 2020:

38

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview



Alaska has moved the needle relative to other states in providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently.

There is room for improvement throughout the metrics in the Last Frontier state, with emphasis on the Environment category. Protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy



- State law does not specifically criminalize running away.
- State law provides partial or full contract rights for youth experiencing homelessness.
- The state explicitly allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.

- Enact and fund a state law similar to the federal RHYA to provide key intervention and emergency services for youth experiencing homelessness.
- Enact a state law that allows youth in need of care to receive services without court involvement.
- Implement a grievance process for students experiencing homelessness that complies with federal law.
- Allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage (without parental consent).

Systems



- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.
- The state allows youth to obtain a state-issued identification card without parental consent.

- Create a state plan to prevent and end youth homelessness, include a strategy to address homelessness among LGBTQ youth.
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment



- The state establishes protected class status based on one's sexual orientation and gender identity for juvenile justice programs.

- Organize and maintain a self-governing youth action board or council to inform youth homelessness policy within the state.
- Require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in runaway and homeless youth systems.
- Ban harmful and ineffective service provision that includes conversion therapy.

Arizona

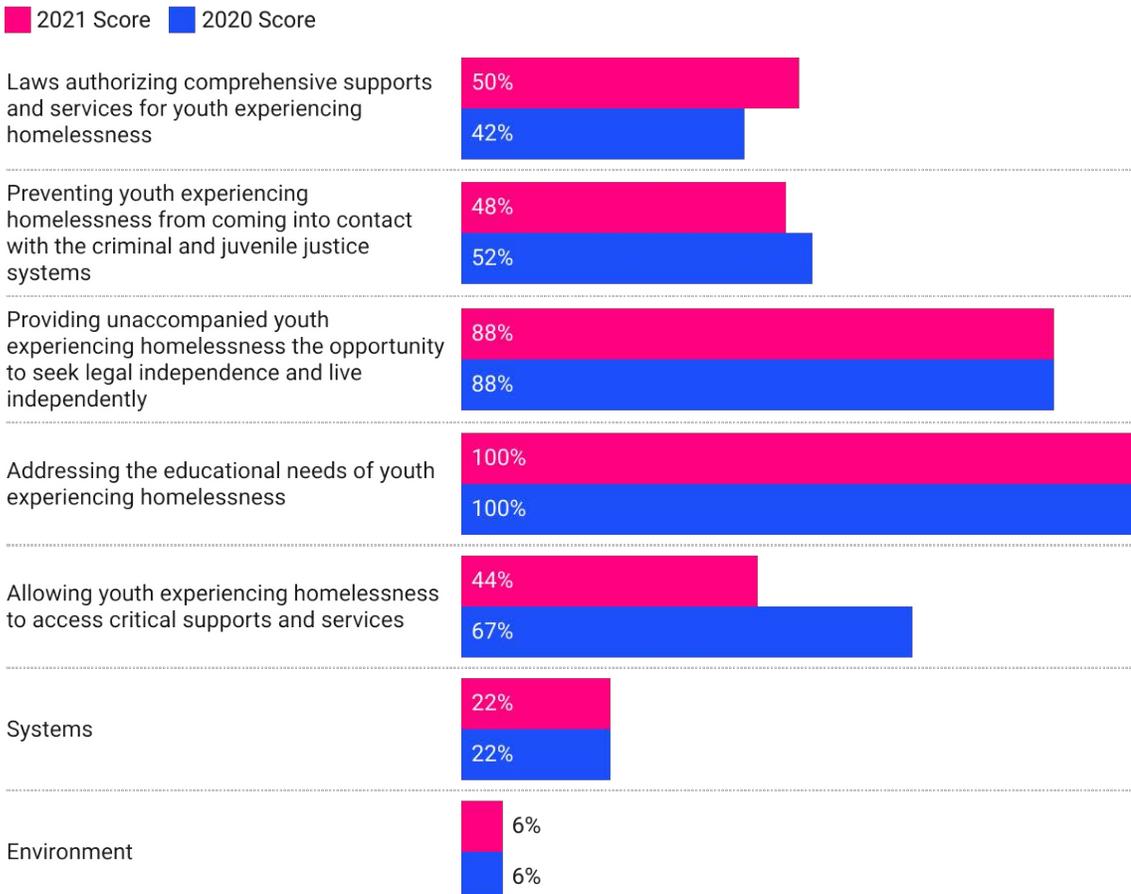
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking: **48**

Overall score 2021: **42**

Overall score 2020: **46**

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

Some areas where **Arizona** has moved the needle relative to other states include providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently and addressing the educational needs of youth experiencing homelessness.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics in the Grand Canyon State, with emphasis on the Systems and Environment categories. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness, decreasing contact with the criminal justice system, and protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- The state has extended foster care to age 21 in certain circumstances and allows young adults under 21 to opt back into services after exiting if needed.
- State law provides partial or full contract rights for youth experiencing homelessness.
- The state explicitly allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.



- Enact and fund a state law similar to the federal RHYA to provide key intervention and emergency services for youth experiencing homelessness.
- Enact a state law that allows youth in need of care to receive services without court involvement.
- Allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage (without parental consent).

Systems

- The state allows youth to obtain a state-issued identification card without parental consent.



- Create a state plan to prevent and end youth homelessness, include a strategy to address homelessness among LGBTQ youth.
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.
- Create an Interagency Council on Homelessness that mirrors the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), providing a multi-sector approach to preventing and ending youth homelessness.

Environment

- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in juvenile justice programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.



- Organize and maintain a self-governing youth action board or council to inform youth homelessness policy within the state.
- Require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in runaway and homeless youth systems.
- Ban harmful and ineffective service provision that includes conversion therapy.
- Promote safe and inclusive environments in child welfare and runaway and homeless youth programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Arkansas

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

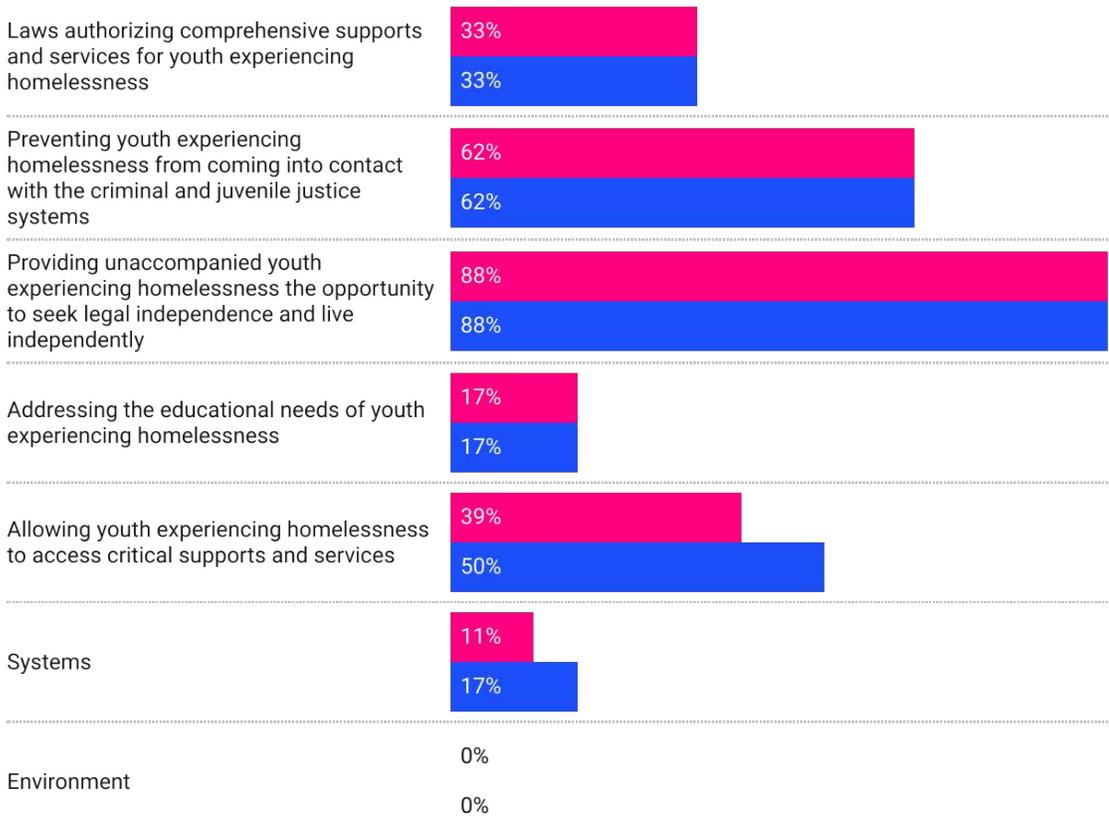
An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness— particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

■ 2021 Score ■ 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

51

Overall score 2021:

34

Overall score 2020:

37

State Highlights

Recommendations
for Improvement

Overview

An area where **Arkansas** has moved the needle relative to other states is providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently.



There is room for improvement across the metrics for the Natural State. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness, addressing their educational needs, and protecting the rights and interests of vulnerable youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- The state has extended foster care to age 21 in certain circumstances and allows young adults under 21 to opt back into services after exiting if needed.
- The state doesn't consider running away a criminal offense.
- The state gives minors contract rights OR allows them to enter into binding contracts for certain purposes.



- Enact and fund a state law similar to the federal RHYA to provide key intervention and emergency services for youth experiencing homelessness.
- Enact a state law which allows shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- Enact regulations which explicitly allow partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth.
- Allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage (without parental consent).

Systems

- The state provides tuition waivers for foster youth.



- The state should create and adopt a public plan to end homelessness that includes youth (and specifically LGBTQ+ youth).
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment

- None.



- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.
- The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.

California

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

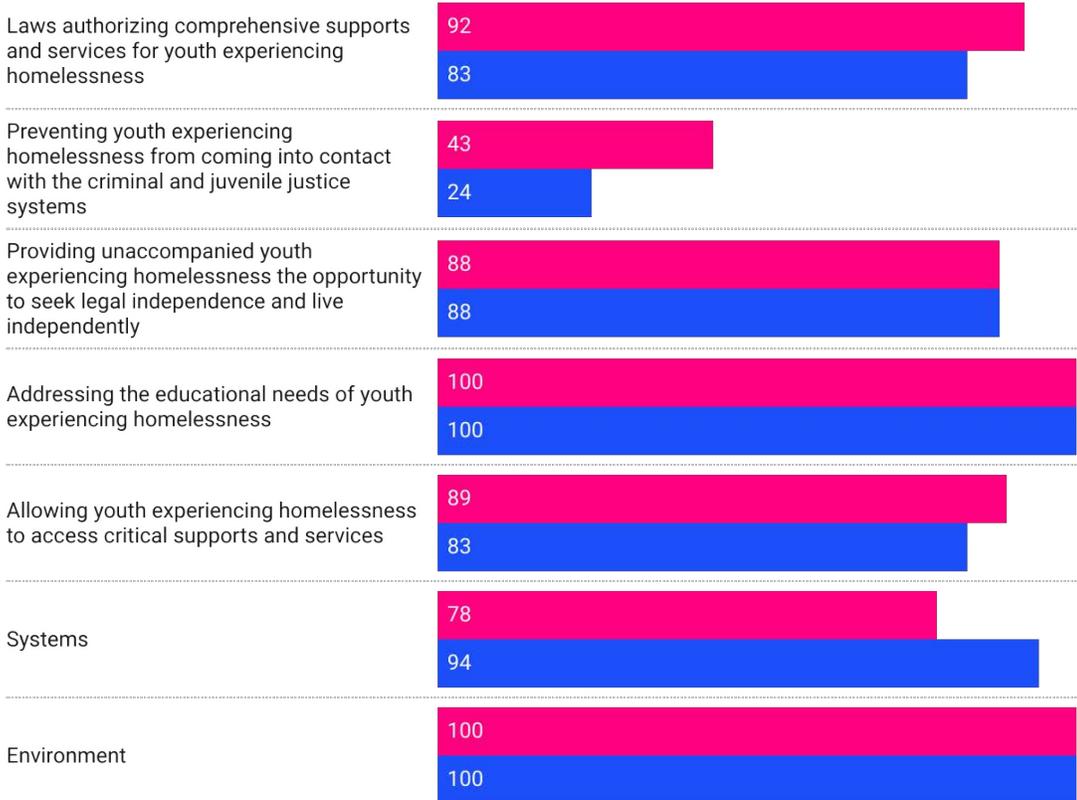
An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

2021 Score 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

4

Overall score 2021:

80

Overall score 2020:

77

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

Some areas where **California** has moved the needle relative to other states include authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness and promoting safety and inclusion by providing protections for LGBTQ+ youth within key state programs.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Golden State, with emphasis on the Law & Policy and Systems categories. Preventing youth experiencing homelessness from coming into contact with the criminal and juvenile justice systems should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

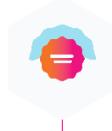
- The state has a state Runaway & Homeless Youth Act.
- The state gives minors contract rights OR allows them to enter into binding contracts for certain purposes (e.g. necessities).
- The state explicitly allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
- The state explicitly allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage (without parental consent).



- Enact a state law which allows shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- Decriminalize runaway youth as delinquent or a status offenders.

Systems

- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains a youth-specific strategy component.
- The State Department of Transportation has systems in place to address proof of residency requirements to receive a state-issued identification card.
- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.



- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment

- The state maintains a community advisory board for youth that informs youth homelessness policy.
- The state requires training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.
- There are nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.



- None.

Colorado

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

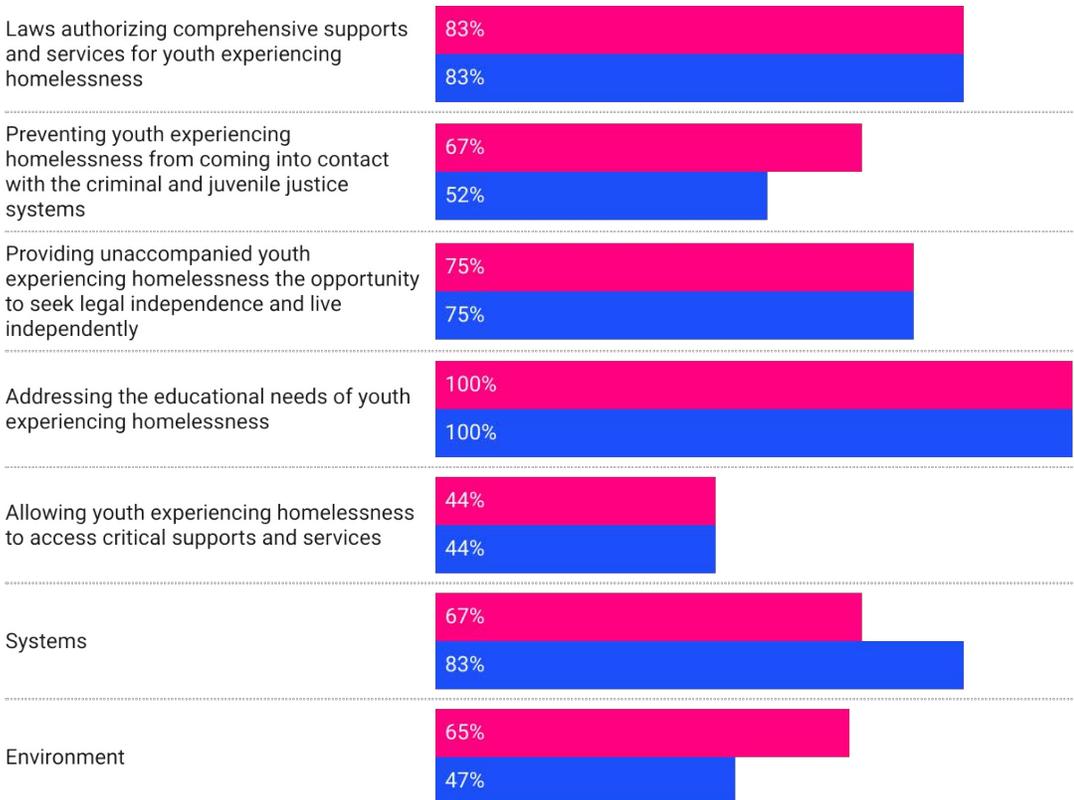
An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

■ 2021 Score ■ 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

11

Overall score 2021:

67

Overall score 2020:

64

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview



Some areas where **Colorado** has moved the needle relative to other states include authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness, preventing their contact with the criminal and juvenile justice systems, elevating the voices of youth who have experienced homelessness by partnering with them throughout policy development, and promoting safety and inclusion by providing protections for LGBTQ youth within key state programs.

There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Centennial State, with emphasis on the Systems and Environment categories. Protecting the rights and interests of vulnerable youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy



- The state has a state Runaway & Homeless Youth Act.
- The state doesn't consider running away a criminal offense.
- The state gives minors contract rights OR allows them to enter into binding contracts for certain purposes (e.g. necessities).
- The state explicitly allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.

- Implement a grievance process for students experiencing homelessness that complies with federal law.
- Allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage on their own.

Systems



- There is a state entity (Office of homeless youth services, homeless youth state coordinator, commission on homeless youth, etc.) that focuses solely on youth homelessness.

- The state plan to end homelessness should be updated to specifically include a youth component and strategies to end homelessness among LGBTQ+ youth.
- The state should allow youth to obtain state-issued identification without parental consent.

Environment



- The state maintains a community advisory board for youth that informs youth homelessness policy.
- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in juvenile justice programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

- Require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in runaway and homeless youth systems.

Connecticut

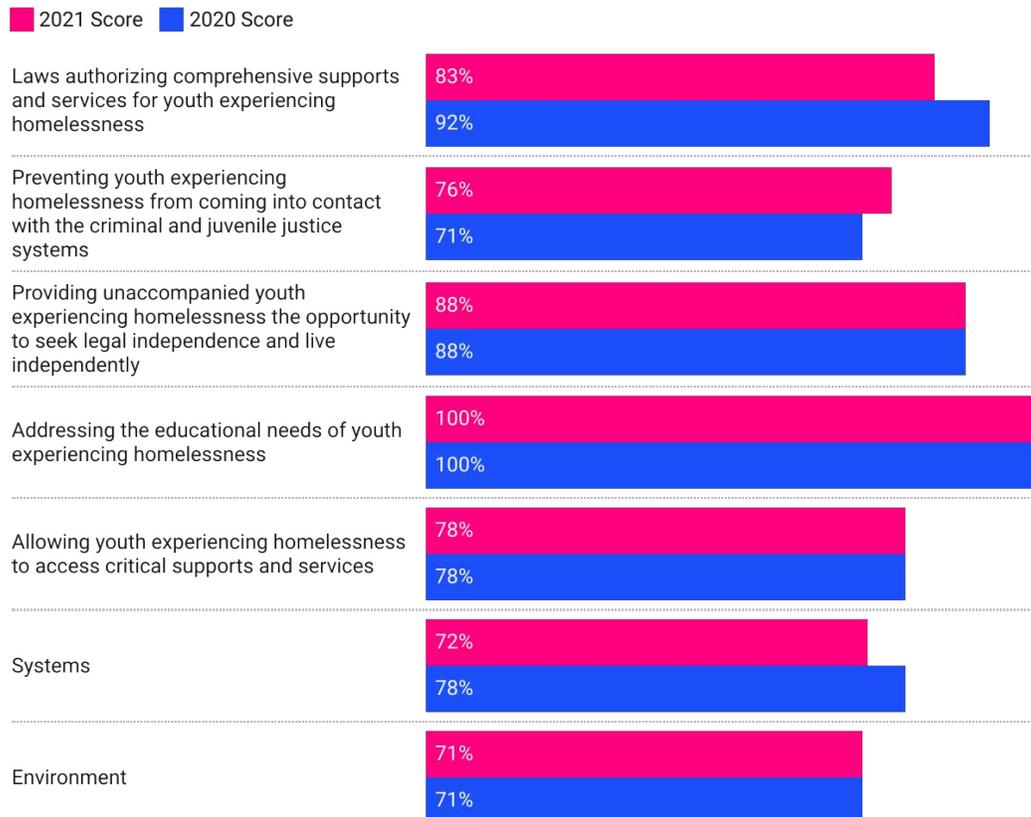
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

6

Overall score 2021:

78

Overall score 2020:

78

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

Some areas where **Connecticut** has moved the needle relative to other states include addressing the educational needs of youth experiencing homelessness and elevating the voices of youth who have experienced homelessness by working with them throughout policy development.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Constitution State.

Law & Policy

- The state explicitly allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
- State law provides partial or full contract rights for youth experiencing homelessness.
- The state allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage on their own.
- The state has extended foster care to age 23 in certain circumstances and allows young adults to opt back into services after exiting if needed.



- The state should allow minors, regardless of their legal status, to consent to examination and treatment relating to a sexual assault without parental consent.
- The state should explicitly allow youth experiencing homelessness to use SNAP benefits to buy hot restaurant or prepared meals.

Systems

- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains youth-specific strategy components.
- The state has systems in place to address proof of residency requirements to receive a state-issued identification card and allows youth to obtain state-issued identification without parental consent.



- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.
- As part of the state plan to prevent and end youth homelessness, include a strategy to address homelessness among LGBTQ youth.

Environment

- The state maintains a self-governing youth action board or council that informs youth homelessness policy.
- The state has banned conversion therapy for minors on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.
- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in child welfare, juvenile justice, and runaway and homeless youth programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.



- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.

Delaware

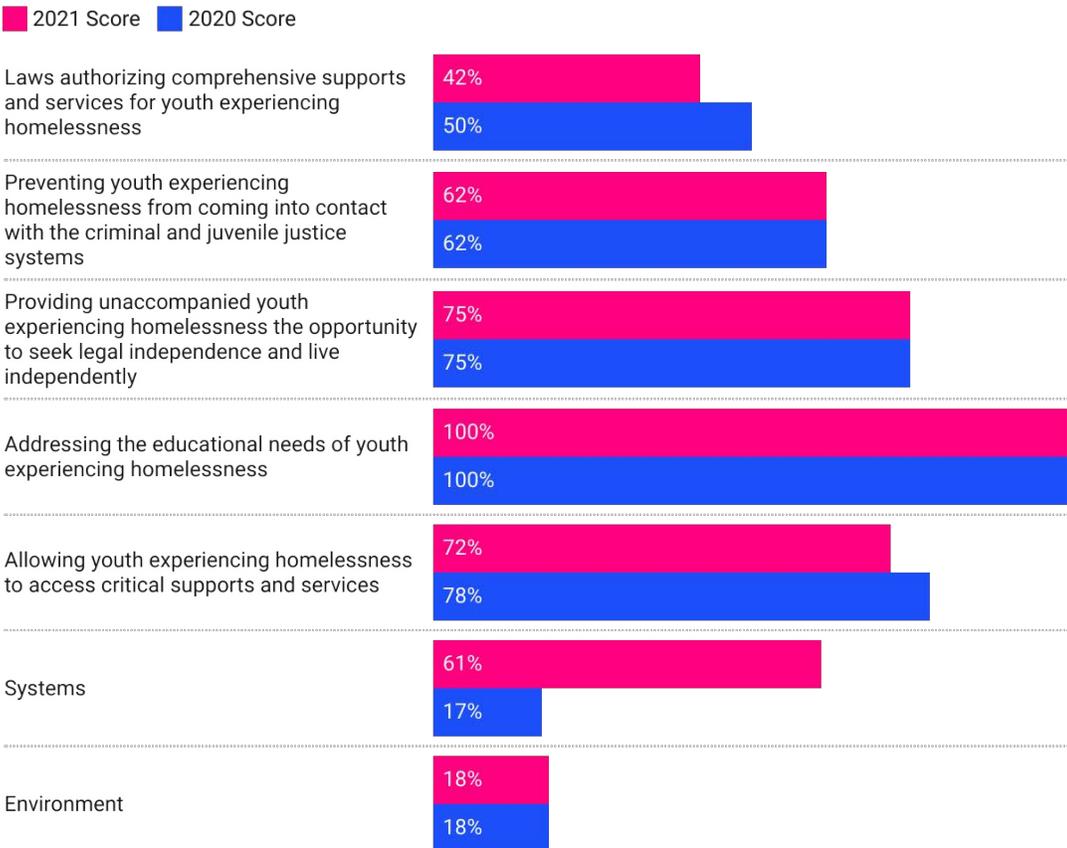
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

19

Overall score 2021:

57

Overall score 2020:

51

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview



Delaware has moved the needle relative to other states in providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently and addressing the educational needs of youth experiencing homelessness.

There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the First State, with emphasis on the Environment category. Laws addressing protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy



- The state does not consider runaway youth as delinquent or a status offender.
- State law provides partial or full contract rights for youth experiencing homelessness.
- The state explicitly allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
- The state allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage on their own.

- The state should allow shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.

Systems



- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains a youth-specific strategy component.

- As part of the state plan to prevent and end youth homelessness, include a strategy to address homelessness among LGBTQ youth.
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment



- The state has banned conversion therapy for minors on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.

- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in RHY systems.
- The state should establish protected class status based on one's sexual orientation and gender identity for runaway and homeless youth programs.

District of Columbia

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

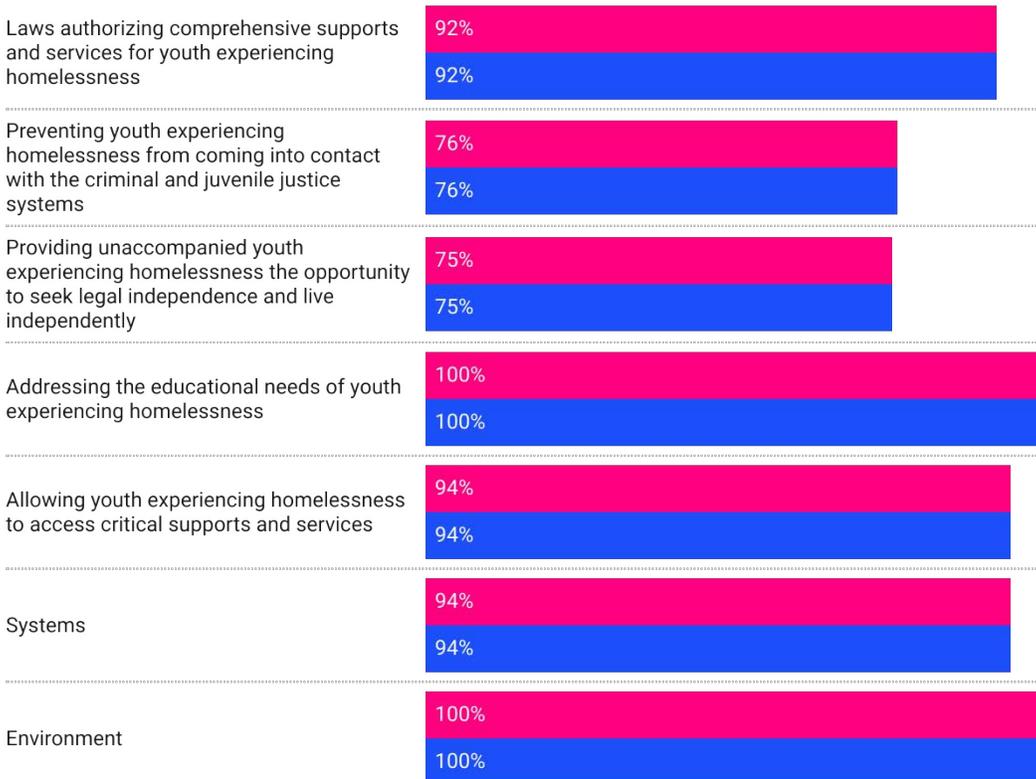
An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

■ 2021 Score ■ 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

1

Overall score 2021:

90

Overall score 2020:

90

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

The **District of Columbia** has moved the needle relative to other states in every category and is the only jurisdiction to earn the equivalent of an “A” grade on the State Index on Youth Homelessness.



There is limited room for improvement throughout the metrics for the District.

Law & Policy

- The District has RHY statutes similar to the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) that provides funding for emergency services and other supports to prevent and end youth homelessness.
- The District does not specifically criminalize running away and limits contact between youth experiencing homelessness and the criminal justice system.
- The District provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights.
- The District allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage on their own.



- The District should remove age restrictions for emancipation and waive parental consent requirements for emancipation.
- The District should prohibit police from taking runaway youth and youth experiencing homelessness into custody.

Systems

- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains youth-specific and LGBTQ youth-specific strategy components.
- There is an interagency council on homelessness.
- There is a state entity (Office of homeless youth services, homeless youth state coordinator, commission on homeless youth, etc.) that focuses solely on youth homelessness.



- The District should ensure that youth can obtain district-issued identification cards without parental consent.

Environment

- The District requires training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in runaway and homeless youth systems.
- The District promotes safe and inclusive environments in child welfare, juvenile justice, and runaway and homeless youth programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- The District has banned conversion therapy for minors on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.



- None.

Florida

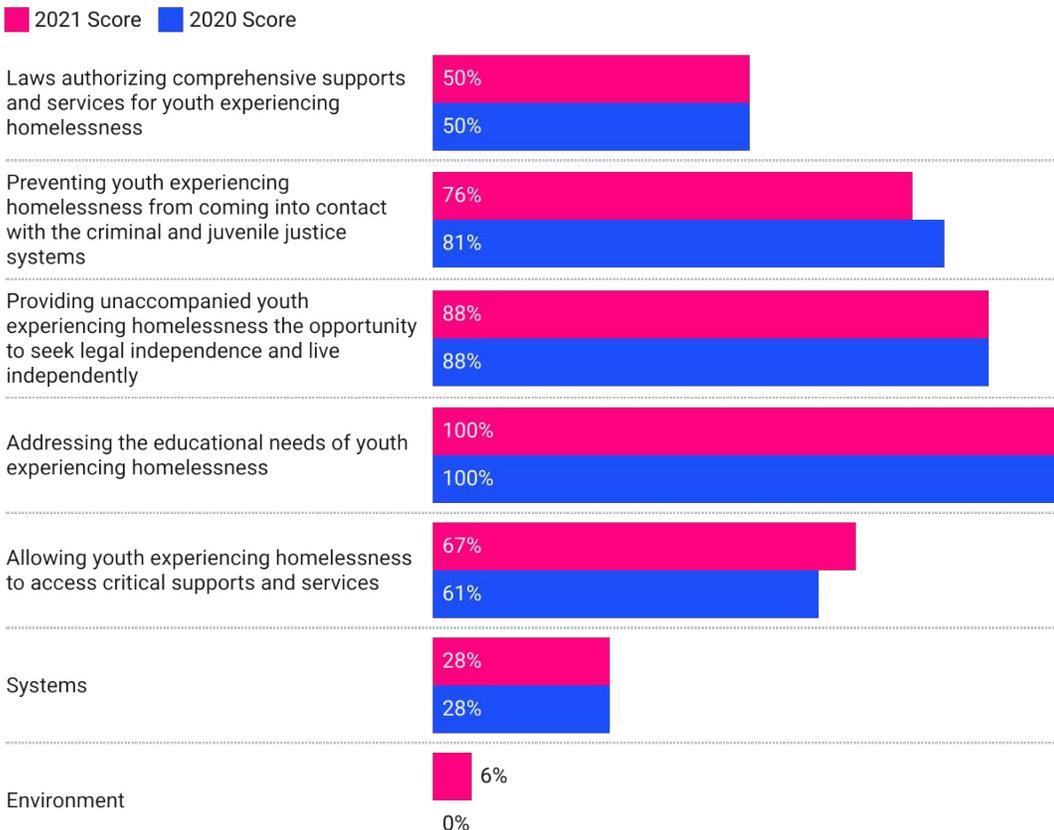
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

26

Overall score 2021:

53

Overall score 2020:

52

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview



Some areas where **Florida** has moved the needle relative to other states include authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness, preventing their contact with the criminal and juvenile justice systems, and providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently.

There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Sunshine State, with emphasis on the Systems and Environment categories. Creating a statewide strategy to end homelessness that includes a youth-specific component and protecting the rights and interests of vulnerable youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy



- State does not consider running away a criminal offense.
- The state allows shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- The state gives minors contract rights OR allows them to enter into binding contracts for certain purposes (e.g. necessities).

- Establish a state Runaway & Homeless Youth Act.
- The District should prohibit police from taking runaway youth and youth experiencing homelessness into custody.

Systems



- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.
- The state provides tuition waivers for foster youth.

- Create a statewide strategy to prevent and end youth homelessness that includes a plan to address homelessness among LGBTQ youth.
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment



- The state establishes protected class status based on one's sexual orientation and gender identity for juvenile justice programs.

- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.
- The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.

Georgia

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

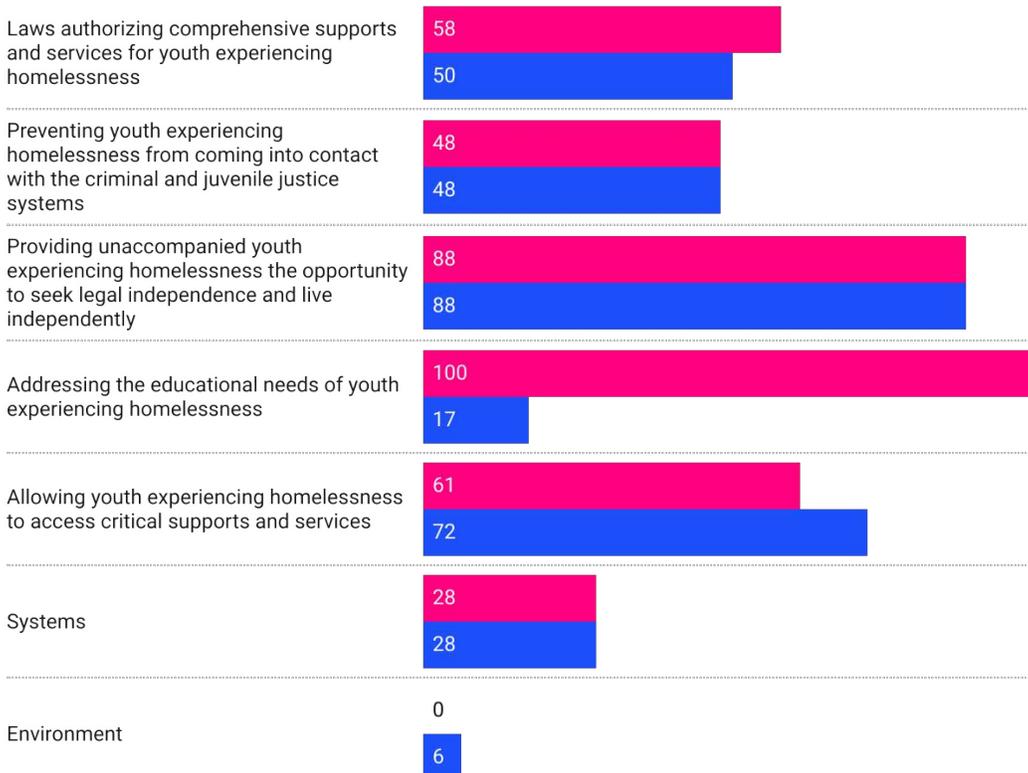
An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

■ 2021 Score ■ 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

40

Overall score 2021:

46

Overall score 2020:

43

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview



Some areas where **Georgia** has moved the needle relative to other states include providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently, addressing their educational needs, and allowing them to access critical supports and services.

There is room for improvement across the metrics for the Peach State. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness, preventing their contact with the criminal and juvenile justice systems, and protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy



- The state has extended foster care to age 21 under certain circumstances and allows young adults under 21 to opt back into services after exiting if needed.
- The state does not consider runaway youth as delinquent or a status offender.
- The state gives minors contract rights OR allows them to enter into binding contracts for certain purposes (e.g. necessities).
- The state allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage on their own.

- Allow shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- Establish a state Runaway & Homeless Youth Act.
- Decriminalize harboring a runaway youth or concealing a minor.

Systems



- Youth can obtain a state-issued identification card without parental consent.

- The state should create and adopt a public plan to end homelessness that includes youth (and specifically LGBTQ+ youth).
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment



- None.

- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.
- The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.

Hawaii

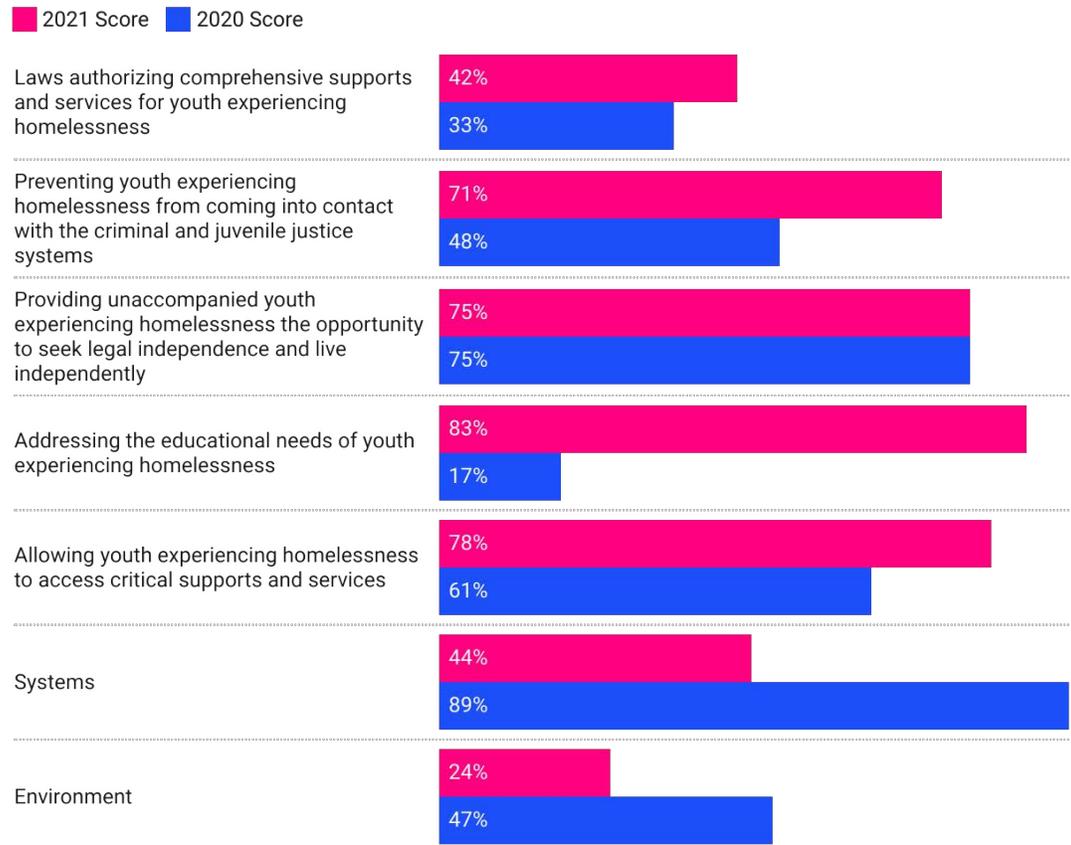
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

19

Overall score 2021:

57

Overall score 2020:

56

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

One area where **Hawaii** has moved the needle relative to other states is providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Aloha State, with emphasis on the Law & Policy and Environment categories. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness, addressing their educational needs, and protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ+ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- The state allows shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- The state can waive or not require parental consent for emancipation.
- The state does not explicitly allow police to take runaway youth into custody.
- The state allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage on their own.



- Establish a state Runaway & Homeless Youth Act.
- The state should allow minors, regardless of their legal status, to consent to examination and treatment relating to a sexual assault (without parental consent).
- The state should decriminalize running away as a status offense.

Systems

- The state provides tuition waivers for foster youth.
- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.



- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment

- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in child welfare and juvenile justice programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- The state has banned conversion therapy for minors on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.



- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- Require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in runaway and homeless youth systems.
- The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.

Idaho

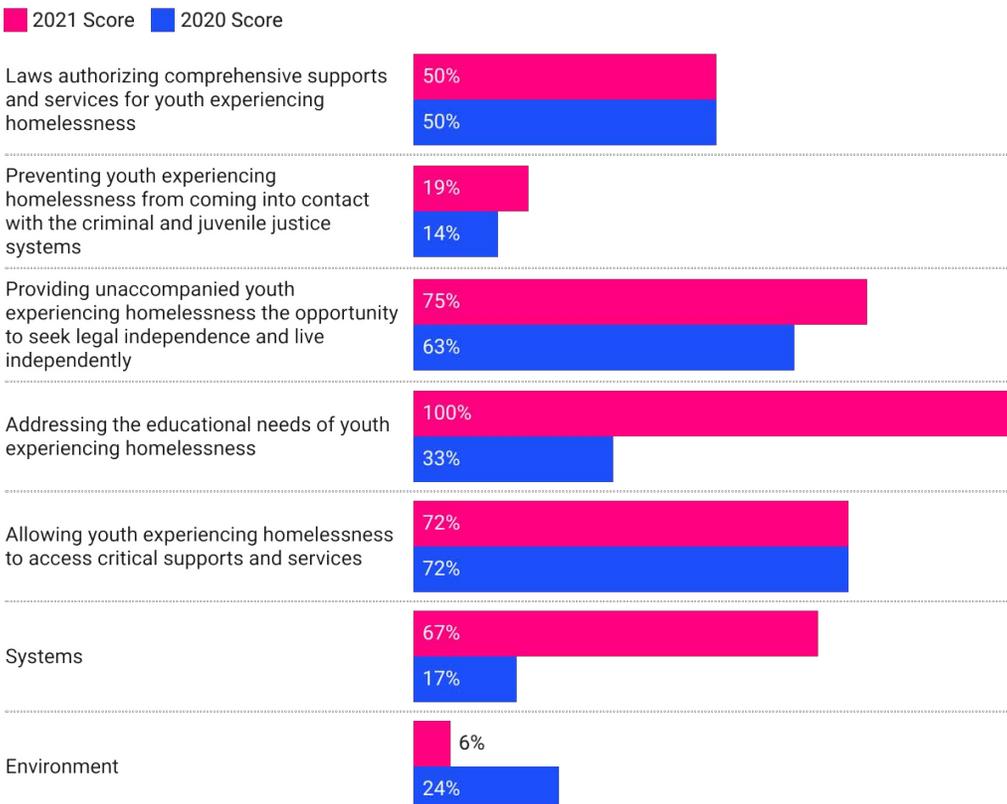
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

36

Overall score 2021:

48

Overall score 2020:

36

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

One area where **Idaho** has moved the needle relative to other states is addressing the educational needs of youth experiencing homelessness.



There is room for improvement across metrics for the Gem State. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness, preventing their contact with the criminal and juvenile justice systems, and protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- The state gives minors contract rights OR allows them to enter into binding contracts for certain purposes (e.g. necessities).
- The state explicitly allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage (without parental consent).



- The state should decriminalize running away as a status offense.
- Allow shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.

Systems

- Youth can obtain a state-issued identification card without parental consent.



- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment

- The state establishes protected class status based on one's sexual orientation and gender identity for juvenile justice programs.



- Require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in runaway and homeless youth systems.
- Promote safe and inclusive environments in juvenile justice and runaway and homeless youth programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Illinois

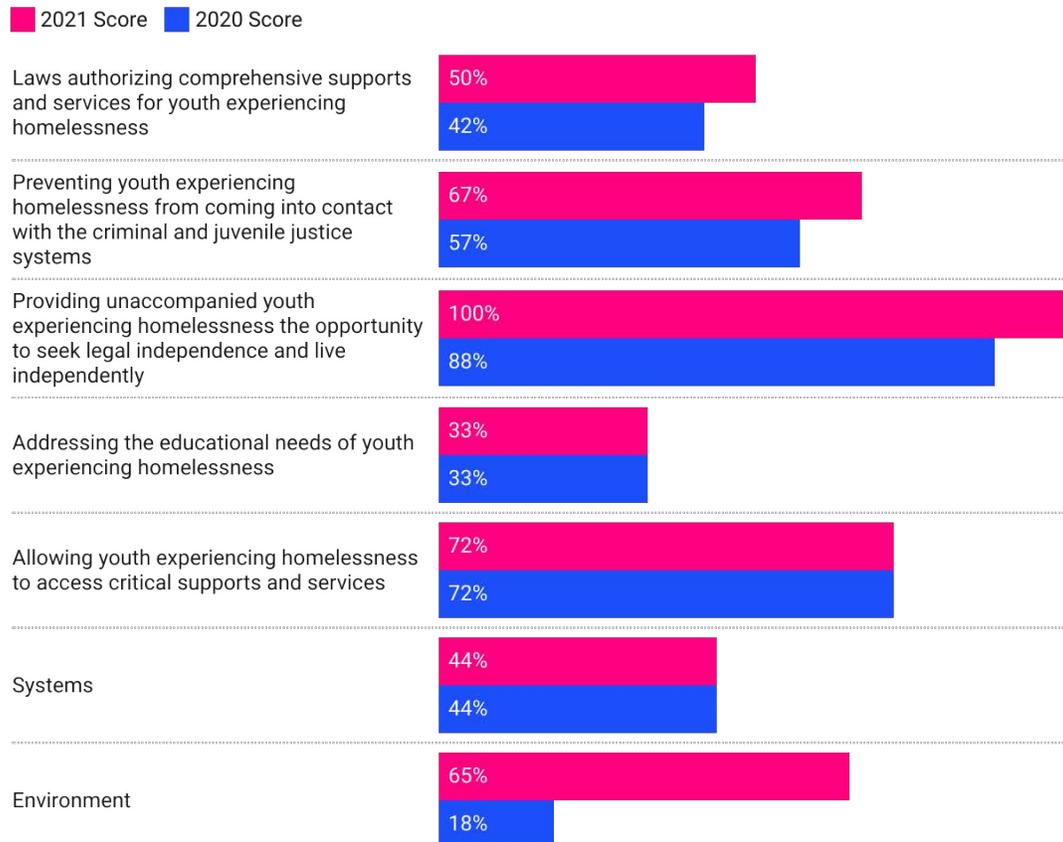
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

13

Overall score 2021:

62

Overall score 2020:

50

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

Some areas where **Illinois** has moved the needle relative to other states include providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and allowing them to access critical supports and services.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Prairie State, with emphasis on the Law & Policy category. Addressing the educational needs of youth experiencing homelessness should be of importance, and protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- The state does not consider runaway youth as delinquent or a status offender.
- The state allows shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- The state gives minors contract rights OR allows them to enter into binding contracts for certain purposes (e.g. necessities).
- The state allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage on their own.



- The state explicitly allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.

Systems

- The state provides tuition waivers for foster youth.
- Youth can gain access to a state-issued identification cards without parental consent in certain circumstances.



- The state should create and adopt a public plan to end homelessness that includes youth (and specifically LGBTQ+ youth).
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.
- Create an Interagency Council on Homelessness that mirrors the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), providing a multi-sector approach to preventing and ending youth homelessness.

Environment

- The state maintains a community advisory board for youth that informs youth homelessness policy.
- The state establishes protected class status based on one's sexual orientation and gender identity for runaway and homeless youth programs.



- Require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in runaway and homeless youth systems.

Indiana

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

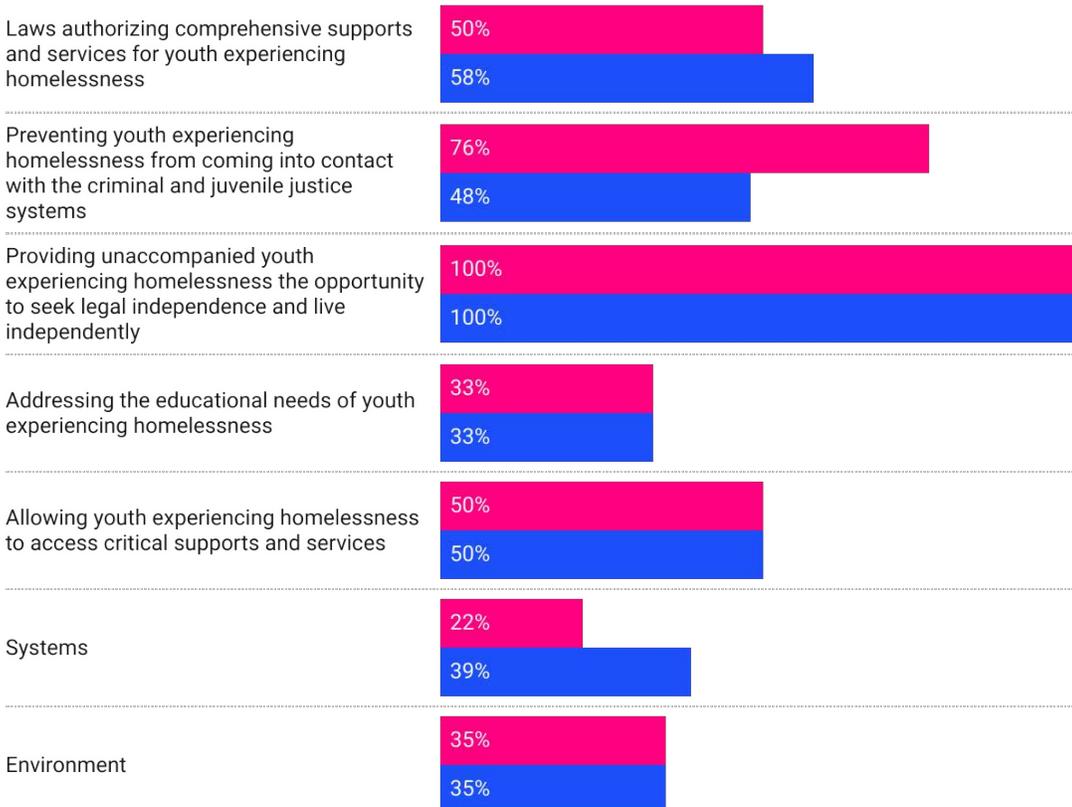
An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

■ 2021 Score ■ 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

29

Overall score 2021:

51

Overall score 2020:

49

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

One area where **Indiana** has moved the needle relative to other states is in providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Hoosier State, with emphasis on the Law & Policy category. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness should be prioritized. Additionally, protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- The state gives minors contract rights OR allows them to enter into binding contracts for certain purposes (e.g. necessities).
- The state allows shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.



- The state should explicitly allow partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
- The state should explicitly allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage without parental consent.

Systems

- The state provides tuition waivers for foster youth.



- The state should create and adopt a public plan to end homelessness that includes youth (and specifically LGBTQ+ youth).
- The state should create an entity – such as an Office of Youth Homelessness Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment

- The state maintains a community advisory board for youth that informs youth homelessness policy.



- Require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in runaway and homeless youth systems.
- Promote safe and inclusive environments in runaway and homeless youth programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Ban harmful and ineffective service provision that includes conversion therapy.

Iowa

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

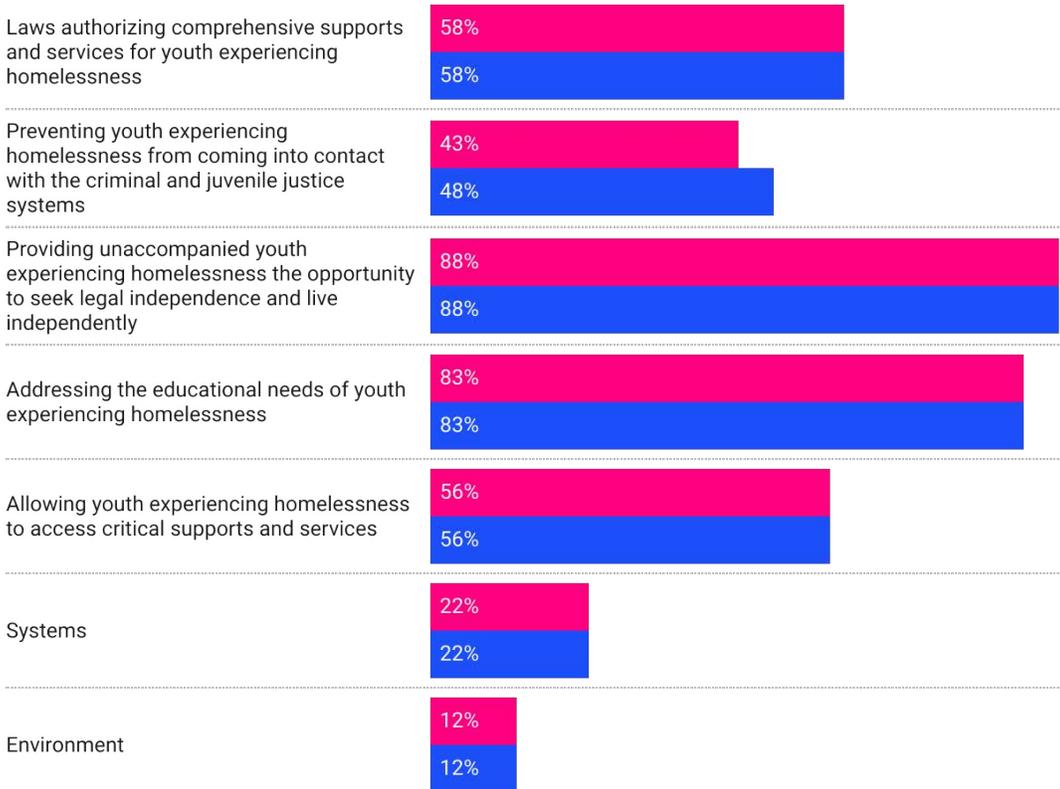
An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

■ 2021 Score ■ 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

45

Overall score 2021:

44

Overall score 2020:

45

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

Some areas where **Iowa** has moved the needle relative to other states include providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently and allowing them to access critical supports and services.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Treasure State. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness should be prioritized. Additionally, protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- State law does not specifically criminalize running away.
- State law provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights.
- The state has a grievance process for students experiencing homelessness in compliance with federal law.



- The state should pass a law that funds and provides oversight and regulation to youth homelessness services.
- The state should allow shelters to take in youth experiencing homelessness with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- The state should explicitly allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage without parental consent.

Systems

- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.



- The state should create and adopt a public plan to end homelessness that includes youth (and specifically LGBTQ+ youth).
- The state should create an entity – such as an Office of Youth Homelessness Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment

- The state establishes protected class status based on one's sexual orientation and gender identity for juvenile justice programs.



- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.
- The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.

Kansas

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

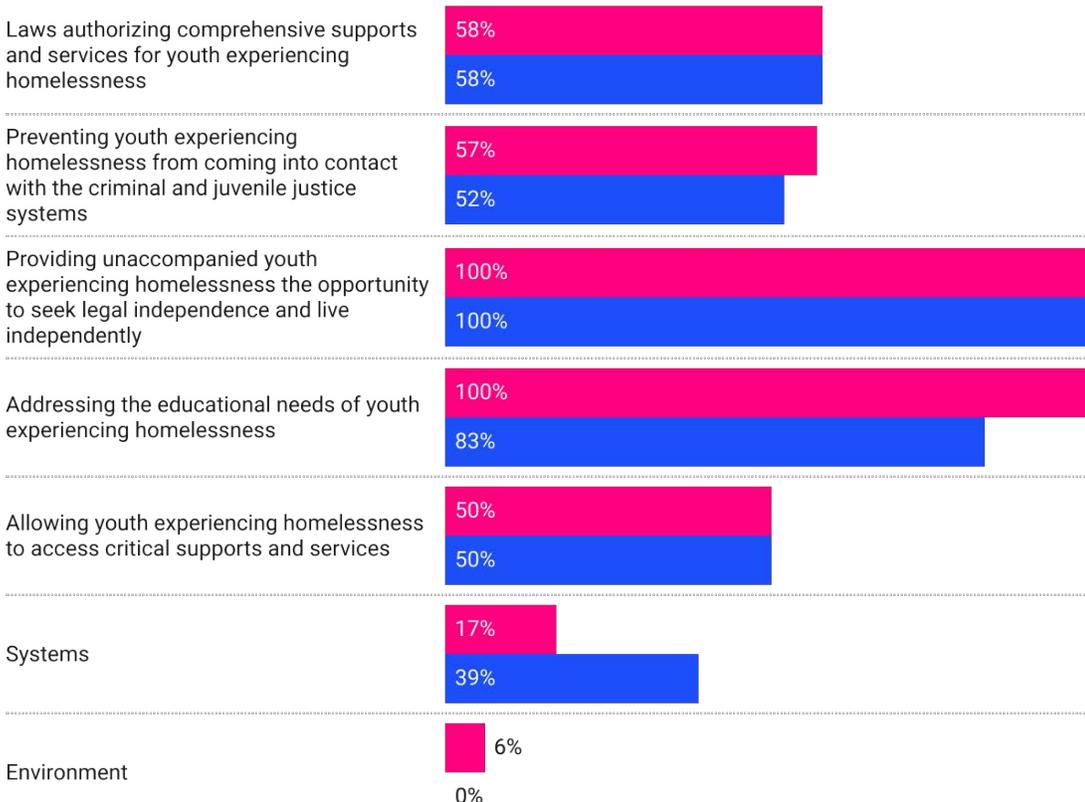
An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

■ 2021 Score ■ 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

40

Overall score 2021:

46

Overall score 2020:

47

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

Some areas where **Kansas** has moved the needle relative to other states include providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently and addressing the educational needs of youth.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Sunflower State, with emphasis on the Law & Policy and Environment categories. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness should be prioritized. Additionally, protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- State law does not specifically criminalize running away.
- State law provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights.
- The state has a grievance process for homeless students in compliance with federal law and allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth.



- The state should allow shelters to take in youth experiencing homelessness with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- The state should explicitly allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage without parental consent.

Systems

- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.



- As part of the state plan to prevent and end youth homelessness, include a strategy to address homelessness among LGBTQ youth.
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment

- The state establishes protected class status based on one's sexual orientation and gender identity for juvenile justice programs.



- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.
- The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.

Kentucky

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

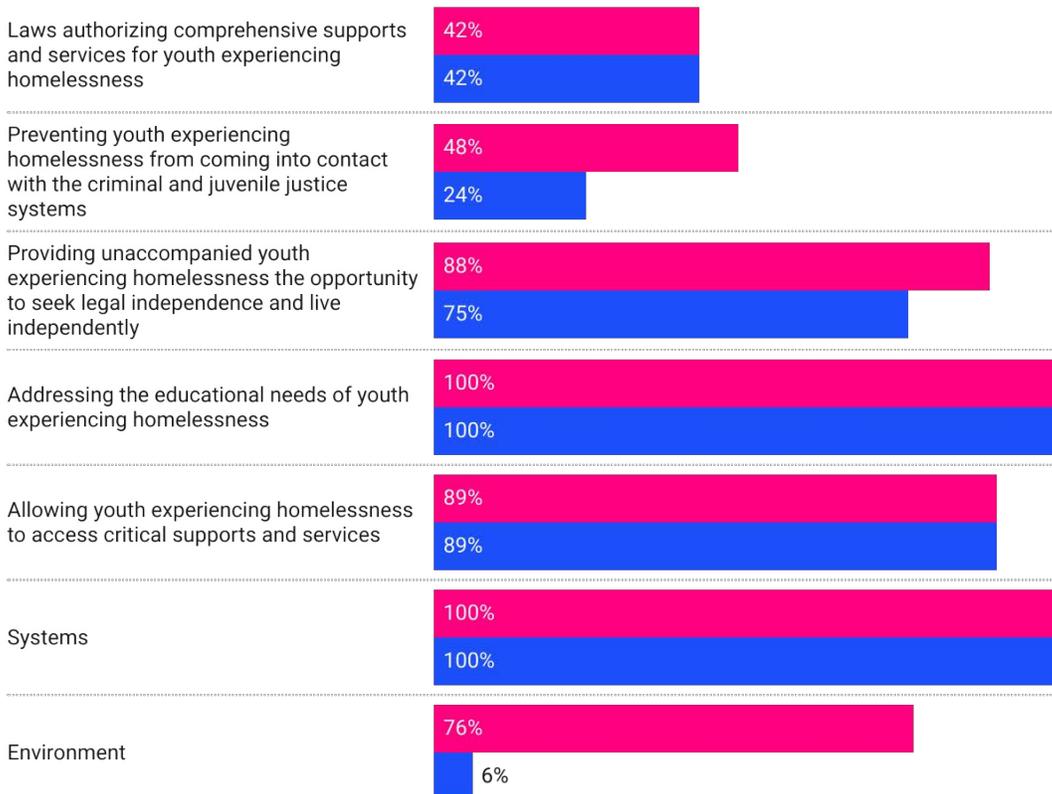
An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

■ 2021 Score ■ 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

10

Overall score 2021:

75

Overall score 2020:

57

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

Kentucky has moved the needle relative to other states including creating systems to address the needs of youth experiencing homelessness, providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently, and addressing the educational needs of youth experiencing homelessness.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Bluegrass State, with emphasis on the Law & Policy and Environment categories. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness and protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- The state does not consider runaway youth as delinquent or a status offender.
- The state explicitly allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
- The state explicitly allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage (without parental consent).



- Allow shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.

Systems

- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains youth and LGBT specific strategy component.
- There is a state entity (Office of homeless youth services, homeless youth state coordinator, commission on homeless youth, etc.) that focuses solely on youth homelessness



- None.

Environment

- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in juvenile justice programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- The state maintains a community advisory board for youth that informs youth homelessness policy.
- The state requires training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual, development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.



- Ban harmful and ineffective service provision that includes conversion therapy.

Louisiana

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

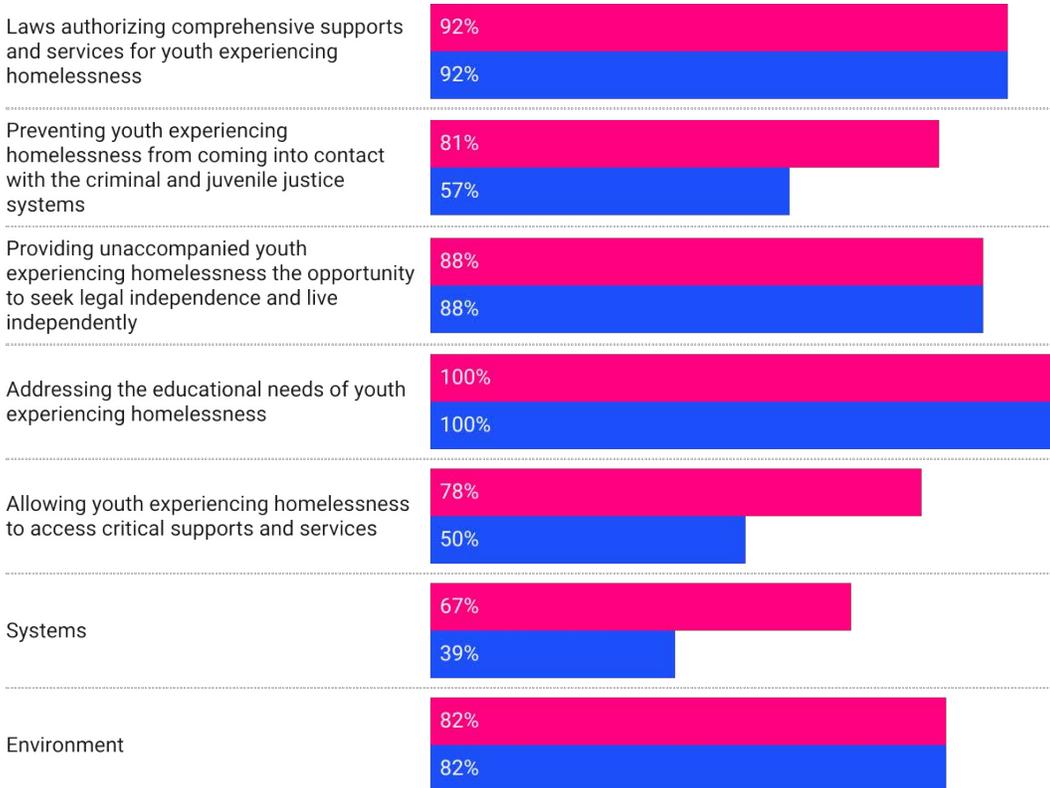
An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

2021 Score 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

3

Overall score 2021:

81

Overall score 2020:

66

State Highlights

Recommendations
for Improvement

Overview



Louisiana has moved the needle relative to other states including providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently, creating systems to address the needs of homeless youth, and protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth.

There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Pelican State. Limiting opportunities for contact between youth experiencing homelessness and the juvenile and criminal justice systems should be prioritized.

Law & Policy



- The state has a state Runaway & Homeless Youth Act.
- The state allows shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- The state gives minors contract rights OR allows them to enter into binding contracts for certain purposes (e.g. necessities).
- The state explicitly allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.

- The state should explicitly allow homeless youth to use SNAP to buy hot restaurant or prepared meals.

Systems



- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains a youth-specific strategy component.

- As part of the state plan to prevent and end youth homelessness, include a strategy to address homelessness among LGBTQ youth.
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.
- Amend regulations to allow minors to obtain state-issued identification without parental consent.

Environment



- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in child welfare, juvenile justice, and runaway and homeless youth programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- The state requires training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in runaway and homeless youth systems.

- Organize and maintain a self-governing youth action board or council to inform youth homelessness policy within the state.
- Ban harmful and ineffective service provision that includes conversion therapy.

Maine

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

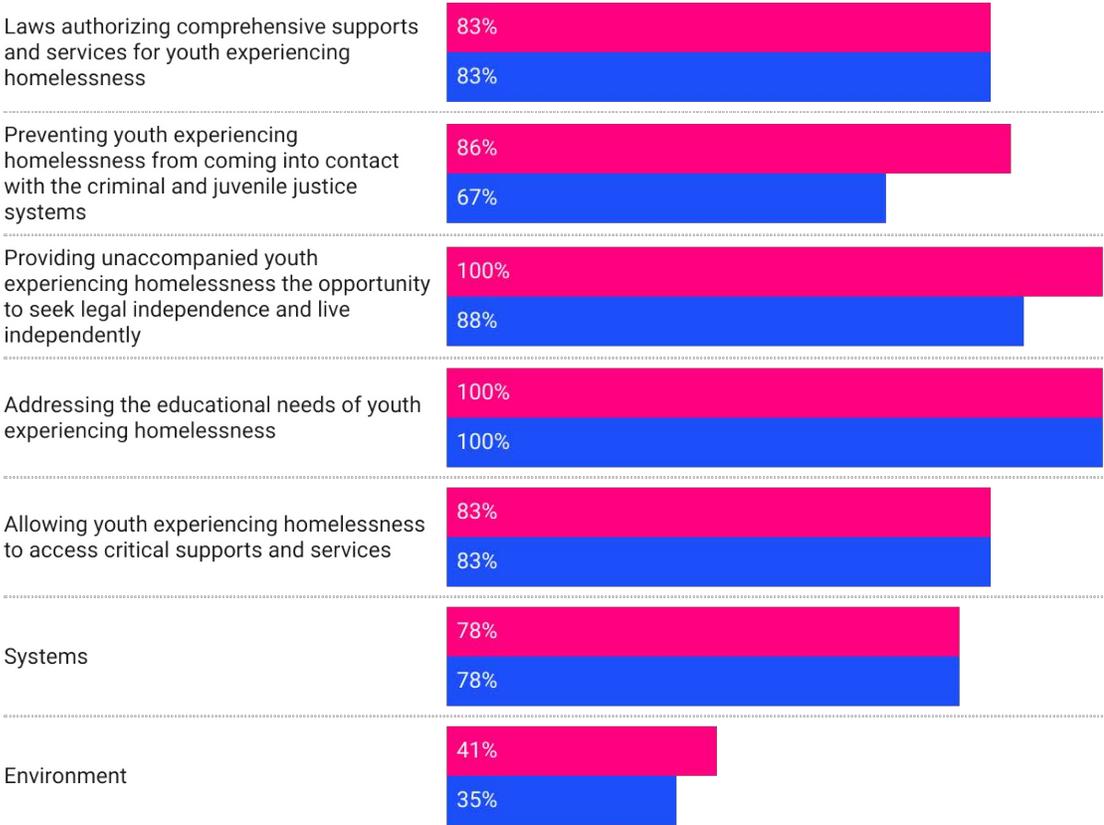
An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

■ 2021 Score ■ 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

6

Overall score 2021:

78

Overall score 2020:

72

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview



Some areas where **Maine** has moved the needle relative to other states include laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness, providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently, allowing them to access critical supports and services, and promoting safe and inclusive environments by providing protections for LGBTQ youth in key programs.

There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Pine Tree State, with emphasis on the Systems category. Protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness by including youth to inform policy should be prioritized.

Law & Policy



- The state has RHY statutes similar to the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) that provides funding for emergency services and other supports to prevent and end youth homelessness.
- State law does not criminally punish youth who run away.
- State law provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights.
- The state allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage on their own.

- The state should allow youth experiencing homelessness to use SNAP benefits to purchase hot restaurant or prepared foods.
- The state should provide transportation home after discharge from the juvenile legal system.

Systems



- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains youth and LGBT specific strategy components.
- The state allows youth to obtain a state-issued identification card without parental consent.

- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment



- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in juvenile justice and child welfare programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

- Organize and maintain a self-governing youth action board or council to inform youth homelessness policy within the state.
- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.

Maryland

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

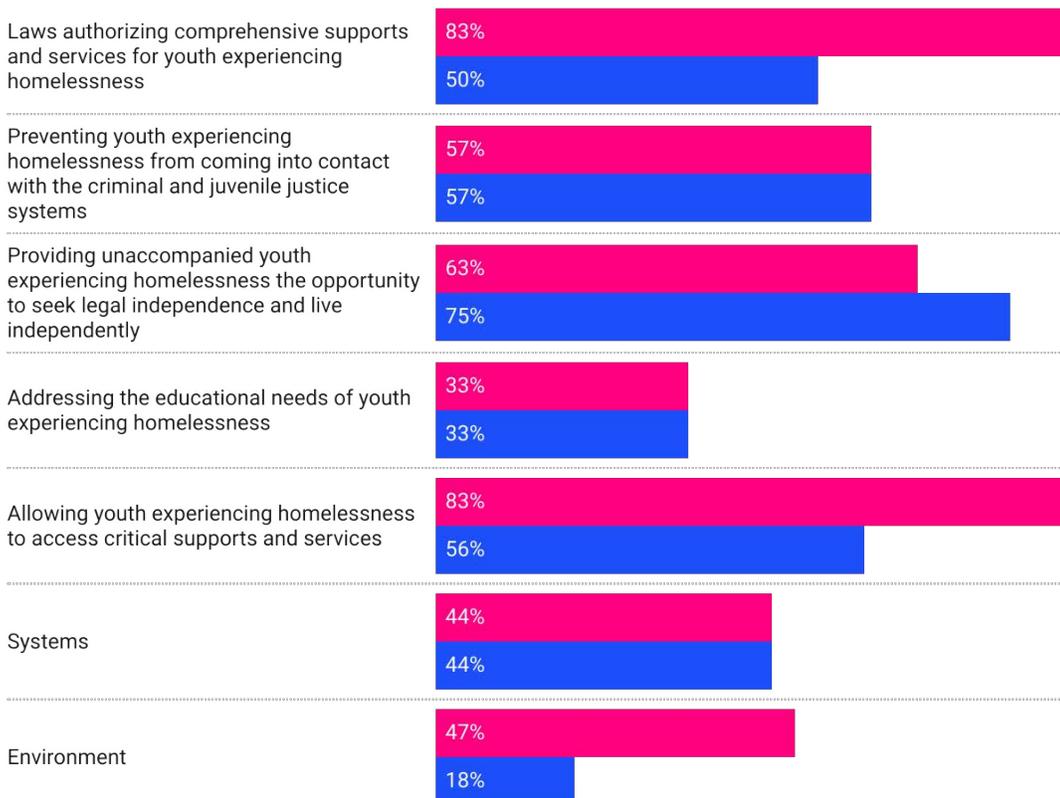
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The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

■ 2021 Score ■ 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

14

Overall score 2021:

60

Overall score 2020:

47

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview



Some areas where **Maryland** has moved the needle relative to other states include providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently and creating systems to address the needs of youth experiencing homelessness.

There is room for improvement across the metrics for the Old Line State, with emphasis on the Law & Policy category. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness should be prioritized. Additionally, protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy



- State law provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights.
- The state allows shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- The state explicitly allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage (without parental consent).

- The state should not consider running away a criminal offense.
- The state should provide transportation home after discharge from the juvenile justice system.
- The state should explicitly allow partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.

Systems



- There is a state entity (Office of homeless youth services, homeless youth state coordinator, commission on homeless youth, etc.) that focuses solely on youth homelessness.
- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.

- The state should create and adopt a public plan to end homelessness that includes youth (and specifically LGBTQ+ youth).
- The state should not require parental consent for youth to obtain a state-issued identification card.

Environment



- The state has banned conversion therapy for minors on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.
- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in child welfare programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in runaway and homeless youth systems.
- The state should establish protected class status based on one's sexual orientation and gender identity for runaway and homeless youth programs.

Massachusetts

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

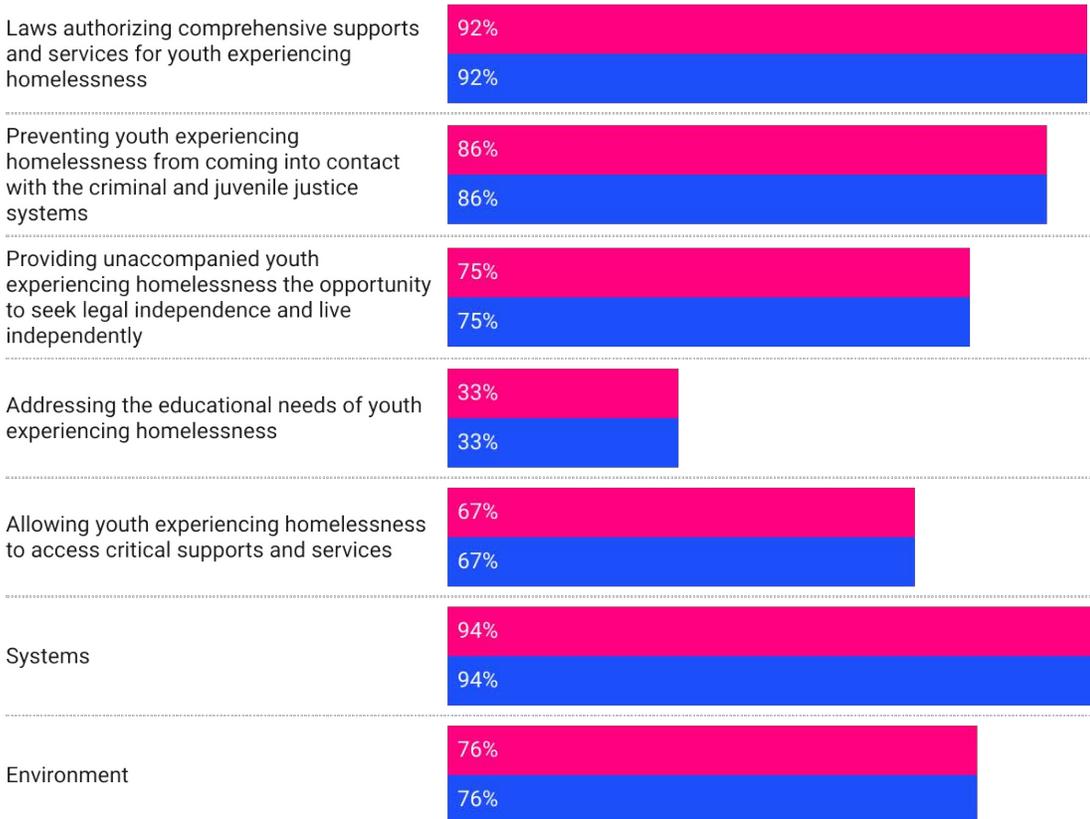
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The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

2021 Score 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

5

Overall score 2021:

79

Overall score 2020:

79

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview



Some areas where **Massachusetts** has moved the needle relative to other states include preventing their contact with the criminal and juvenile justice systems, allowing them to access critical supports and services, creating systems to address their needs, and promoting safe and inclusive environments by providing protections for LGBTQ youth in key programs.

There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Bay State, with emphasis on the Law & policy category.

Law & Policy



- The state has RHY statutes similar to the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) that provides funding for emergency services and other supports to prevent and end youth homelessness.
- State law does not specifically criminalize running away.
- State law provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights.

- Establish a formal process for emancipation.
- The state should explicitly allow partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
- The state should explicitly allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage (without parental consent).

Systems



- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains a youth-specific strategy component which addresses the needs of LGBTQ youth.
- The state has created an entity that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.
- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.

- The state should allow youth to obtain state-issued ID without parental consent.

Environment



- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in juvenile justice and child welfare programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- The state has banned conversion therapy for minors on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.

- The state should establish protected class status based on one's sexual orientation and gender identity for runaway and homeless youth programs.

Michigan

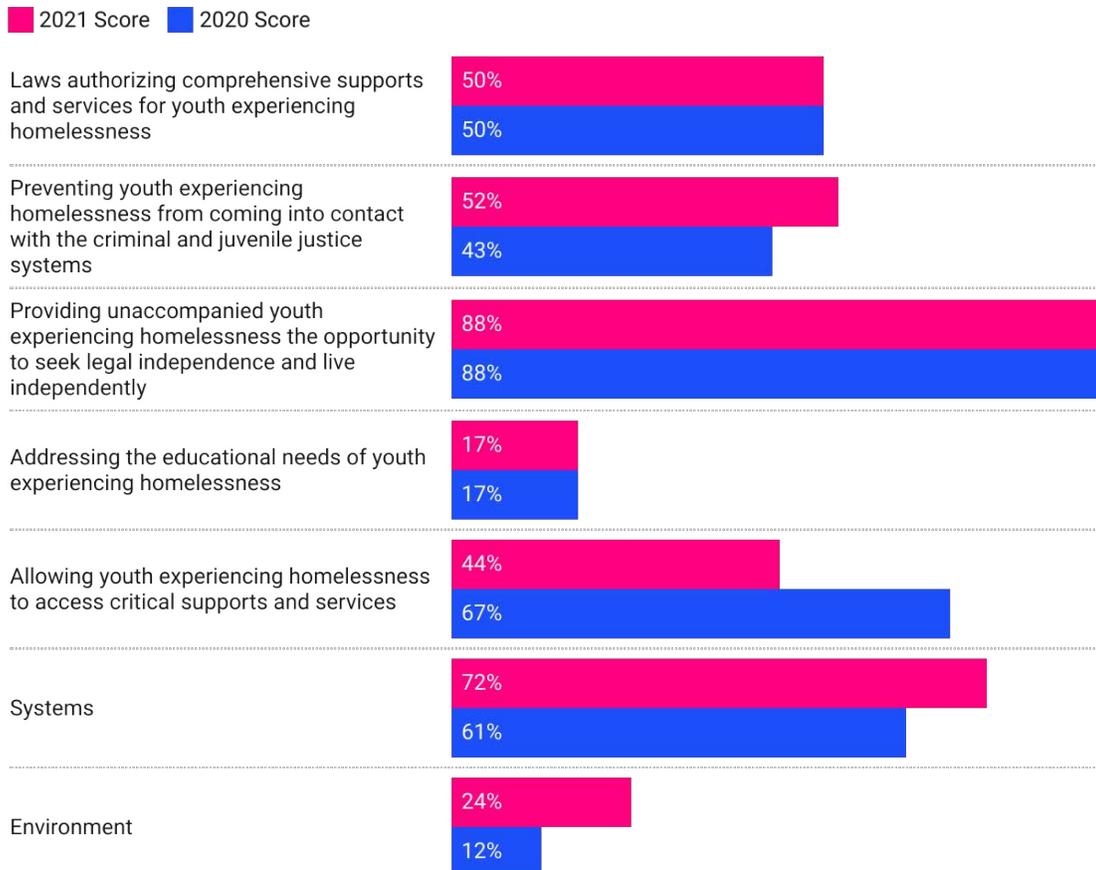
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

31

Overall score 2021:

50

Overall score 2020:

48

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

Some areas where **Michigan** has moved the needle relative to other states include providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently and creating systems to address the needs of homeless youth.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Great Lakes State, with emphasis on the Law & Policy category. Addressing the educational needs of youth experiencing homelessness should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- State law does not specifically criminalize running away.
- State law provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights.



- Enact and fund a state law similar to the federal RHYA to provide key intervention and emergency services for youth experiencing homelessness.
- The state should explicitly allow partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
- The state should explicitly allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage (without parental consent).

Systems

- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains a youth-specific strategy component which addresses the needs of LGBTQ youth.
- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.



- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment

- The state establishes protected class status based on one's sexual orientation and gender identity for juvenile justice programs.



- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.
- The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.

Minnesota

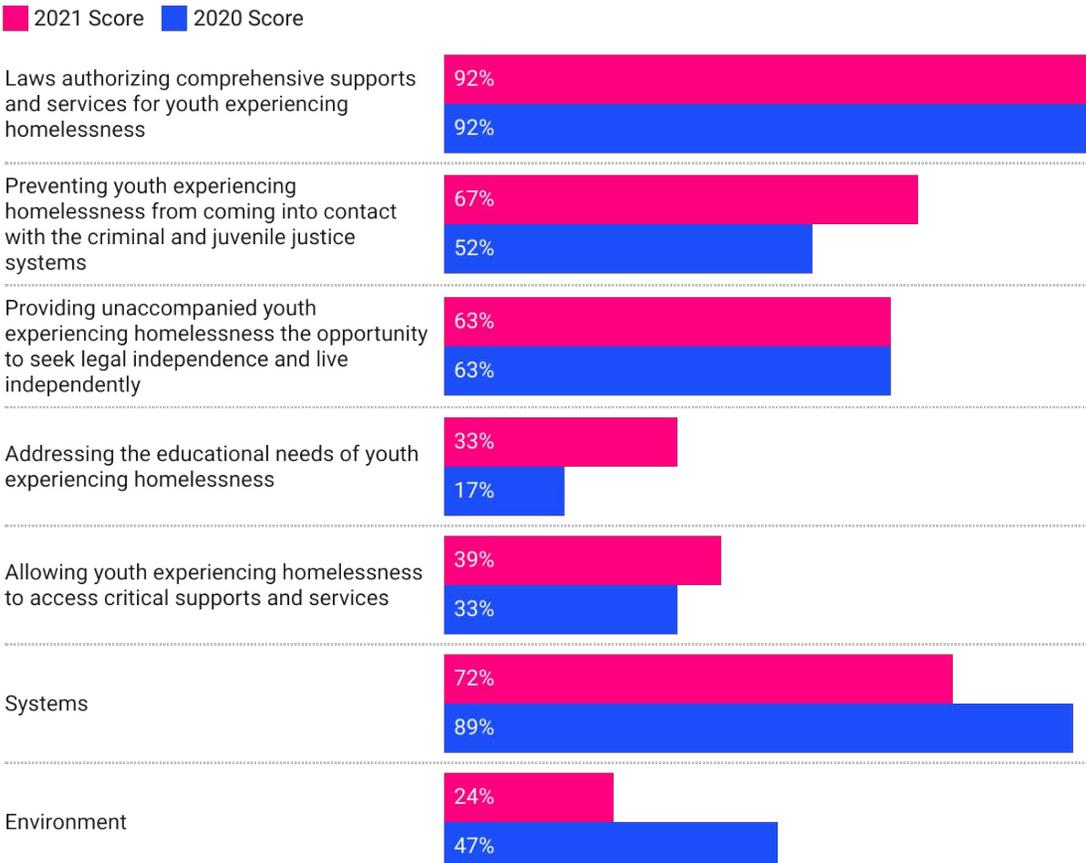
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

21

Overall score 2021:

56

Overall score 2020:

58

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

Some areas where **Minnesota** has moved the needle relative to other states include laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness, allowing them to access critical supports and services, and implementing a multi-sector approach to addressing youth homelessness.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the North Star State, with emphasis on the Environment category. Creating a more welcoming, safe, and inclusive environment for youth experiencing homelessness should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- The state has RHY statutes similar to the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) that provides funding for emergency services and other supports to prevent and end youth homelessness.
- State law does not criminally punish youth who run away.
- The state allows shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.



- Enact regulations which explicitly allow partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth.
- Establish a formal process for emancipation.
- Enact regulations which explicitly allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage without parental consent.

Systems

- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains a youth-specific strategy component which addresses the needs of LGBTQ youth.
- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.
- The state provides tuition waivers for foster youth.



- The state should allow minors to obtain state-issued ID without parental consent.
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment

- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in child welfare programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.



- Require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in runaway and homeless youth systems.
- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.
- Ban harmful and ineffective service provision that includes conversion therapy.

Mississippi

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

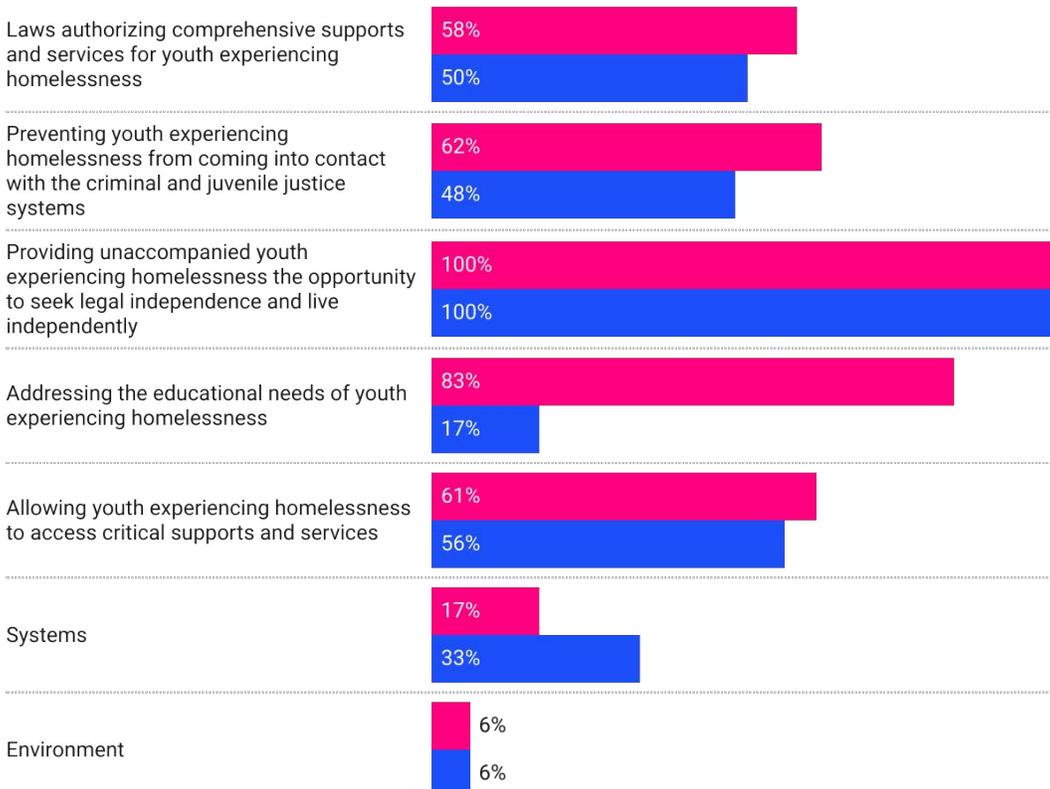
An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

■ 2021 Score ■ 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

36

Overall score 2021:

48

Overall score 2020:

42

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

One area where **Mississippi** has moved the needle relative to other states is in providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Magnolia State, with emphasis on the Systems and Environment categories. Policies authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness and protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- State law provides partial or full contract rights for youth experiencing homelessness.
- The state explicitly allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
- The state allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage on their own.



- Enact and fund a state law similar to the federal RHYA to provide key intervention and emergency services for youth experiencing homelessness.
- The state should allow shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- The state should allow minors, regardless of their legal status, to consent to examination and treatment relating to a sexual assault (without parental consent).

Systems

- The State Department of Transportation has systems in place to address proof of residency requirements to receive a state-issued identification card
- The state allows youth to obtain a state-issued identification card without parental consent



- The state should create and adopt a public plan to end homelessness that includes youth (and specifically LGBTQ+ youth).
- The state should create an entity – such as an Office of Youth Homelessness Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs

Environment

- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in child welfare programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.



- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.
- The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.

Missouri

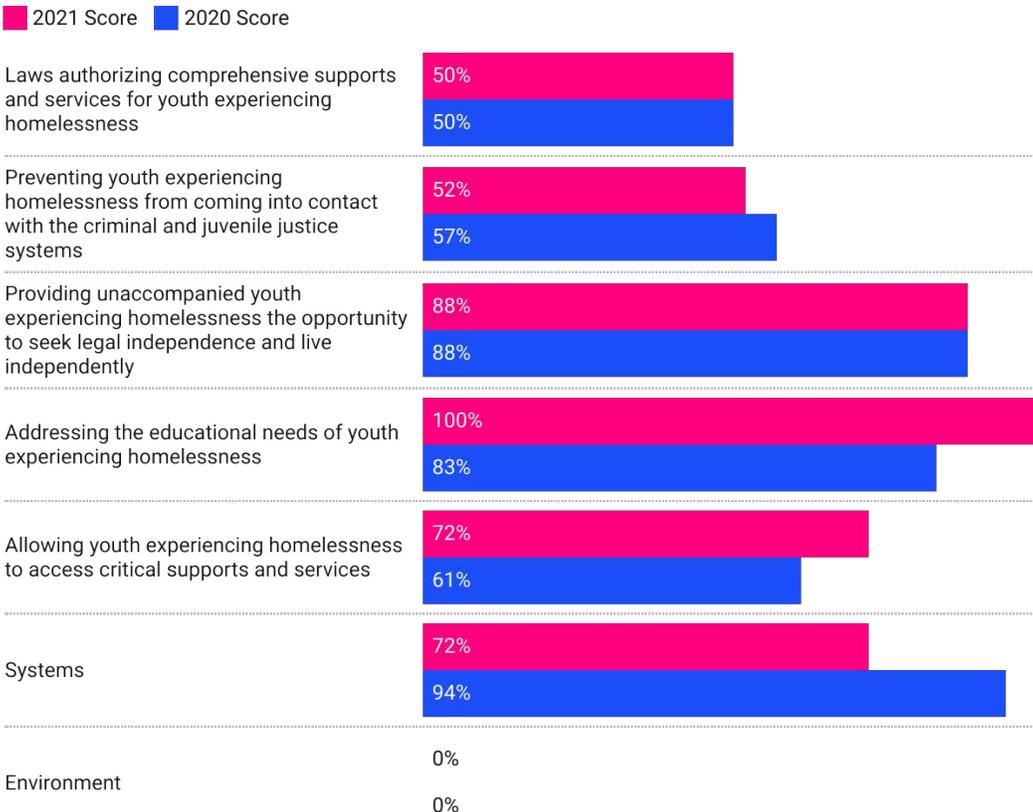
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

21

Overall score 2021:

56

Overall score 2020:

58

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

Some areas where **Missouri** has moved the needle relative to other states include providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently, preventing youth experiencing homelessness from coming into contact with the criminal and juvenile justice systems, and addressing the educational needs of youth experiencing homelessness.



There is room for improvement across the metrics for the Show-Me State, with much more state support needed to prevent and end youth homelessness. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness and protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- State law does not specifically criminalize running away.
- State law provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights.
- The state explicitly allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
- The state allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage on their own.



- Enact and fund a state law similar to the federal RHYA to provide key intervention and emergency services for youth experiencing homelessness.
- The state should have a transition plan for children exiting the juvenile justice system.

Systems

- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains a youth-specific strategy component.
- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.



- The state plan to end homelessness should be updated to include strategies specific to LGBTQ+ youth.
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment

- None.



- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.
- The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.

Montana

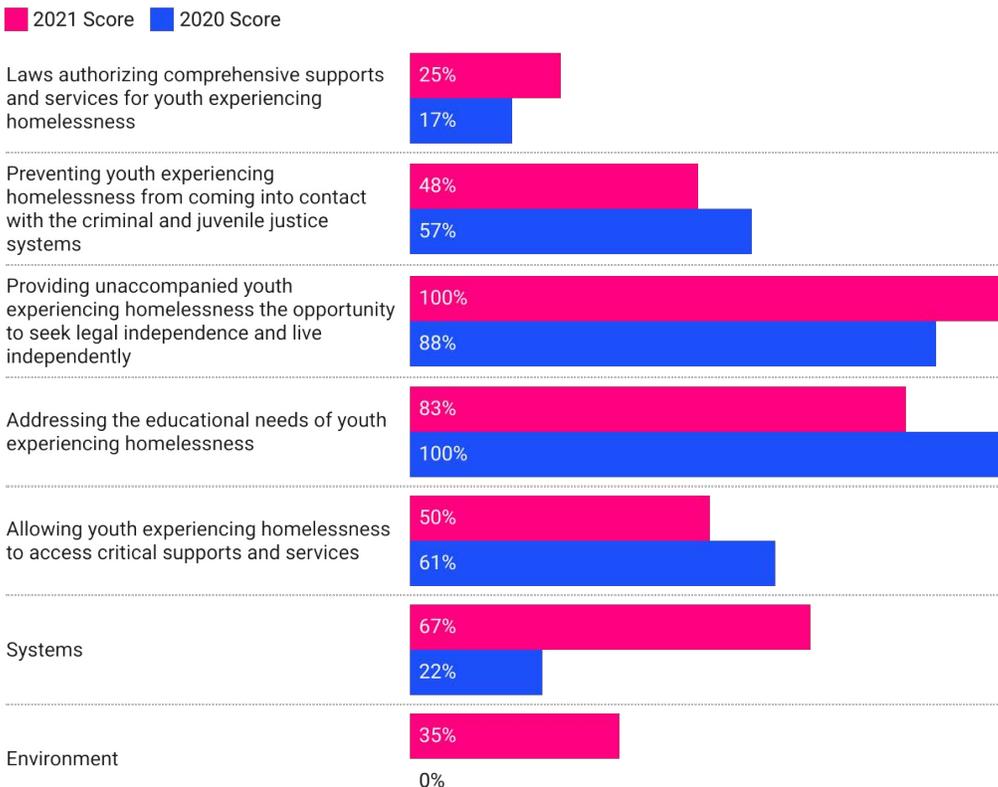
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

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The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

26

Overall score 2021:

53

Overall score 2020:

42

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview



Some areas where **Montana** has moved the needle relative to other states include not relying on the criminal justice system to provide services to youth experiencing homelessness and providing youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights.

There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Treasure State, with emphasis on the Systems and Environment categories. Protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy



- State law does not specifically criminalize running away.
- State law provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights.
- The state explicitly allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
- The state explicitly allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage (without parental consent).

- Enact and fund a state law similar to the federal RHYA to provide key intervention and emergency services for youth experiencing homelessness.
- The state should allow shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.

Systems



- The state has systems in place to address proof of residency requirements to receive a state-issued identification card and allows youth to obtain state issued identification without parental consent.
- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains a youth-specific strategy component.

- The state should create and adopt a public plan to end homelessness that includes youth (and specifically LGBTQ+ youth).
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment



- The state maintains a community advisory board for youth that informs youth homelessness policy.

- Require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in runaway and homeless youth systems.
- Promote safe and inclusive environments in child welfare, juvenile justice, and runaway and homeless youth programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Ban harmful and ineffective service provision that includes conversion therapy.

Nebraska

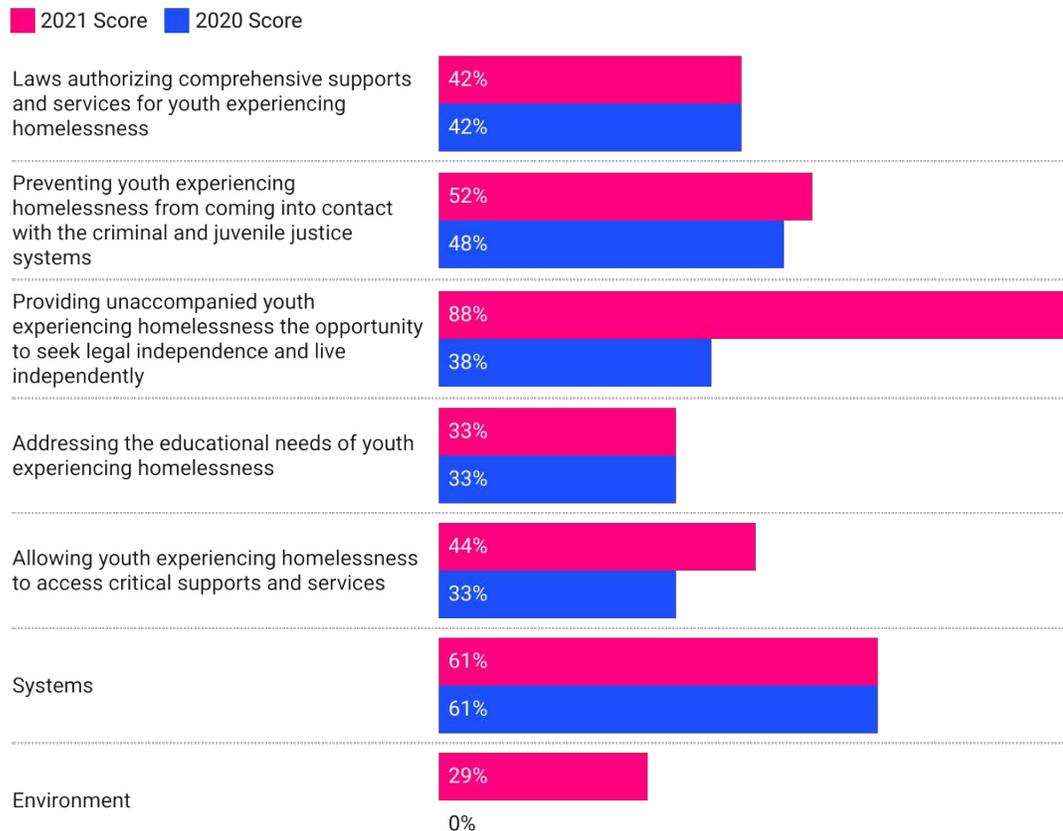
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This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

33

Overall score 2021:

49

Overall score 2020:

37

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview



Some areas where **Nebraska** has moved the needle relative to other states by providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently.

There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Cornhusker State, with emphasis on the Law & Policy and Environment categories. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness and protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy



- State law does not specifically criminalize running away.
- The state gives minors some contract rights.

- Enact and fund a state law similar to the federal RHYA to provide key intervention and emergency services for youth experiencing homelessness.
- The state should allow shelters to take in youth experiencing homelessness with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- The state should explicitly allow partial and alternative school credit accrual.
- The state should allow youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage without parental consent.

Systems



- Youth are able to obtain state-issued identification cards without parental consent.
- The state has an interagency council on homelessness.
- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains a youth-specific strategy component.

- The state plan to end homelessness should be updated to include strategies specific to LGBTQ + youth.
- The state should create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment



- The state maintains a community advisory board for youth that informs youth homelessness policy .

- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.
- The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.

Nevada

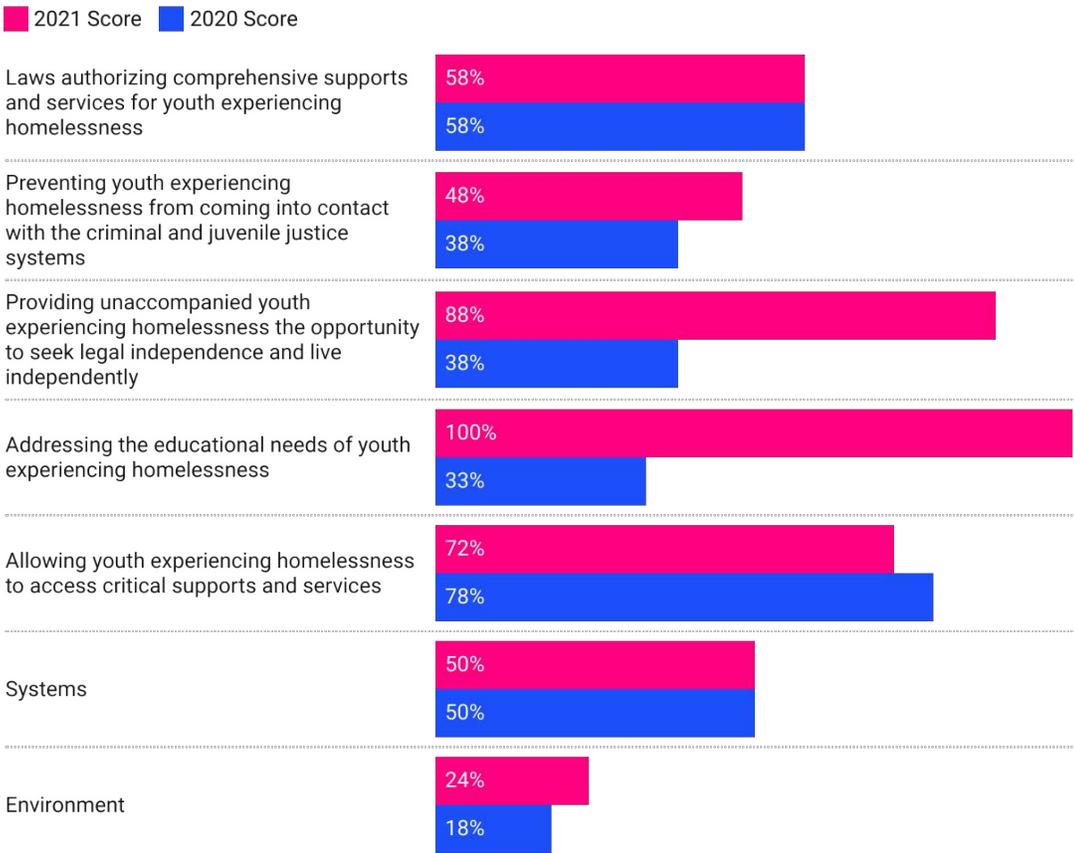
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

21

Overall score 2021:

56

Overall score 2020:

46

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

Some areas where **Nevada** has moved the needle relative to other states include authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness and preventing youth from coming into contact with the criminal and juvenile justice systems.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Silver State, with emphasis on the Environment category. Protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- State law does not specifically criminalize running away.
- State law provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights.
- The state explicitly allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
- The state explicitly allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage (without parental consent).



- The state should provide transportation home after discharge from the juvenile justice system.
- The state should allow shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.

Systems

- There is a current state plan to end homelessness.
- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.
- Youth can obtain a state-issued identification card without require parental consent.



- The state should create and adopt a public plan to end homelessness that includes youth (and specifically LGBTQ+ youth).
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment

- The state has banned conversion therapy for minors on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.
- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in child welfare programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.



- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- Require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in runaway and homeless youth systems.
- Promote safe and inclusive environments in child welfare, juvenile justice, and runaway and homeless youth programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

New Hampshire

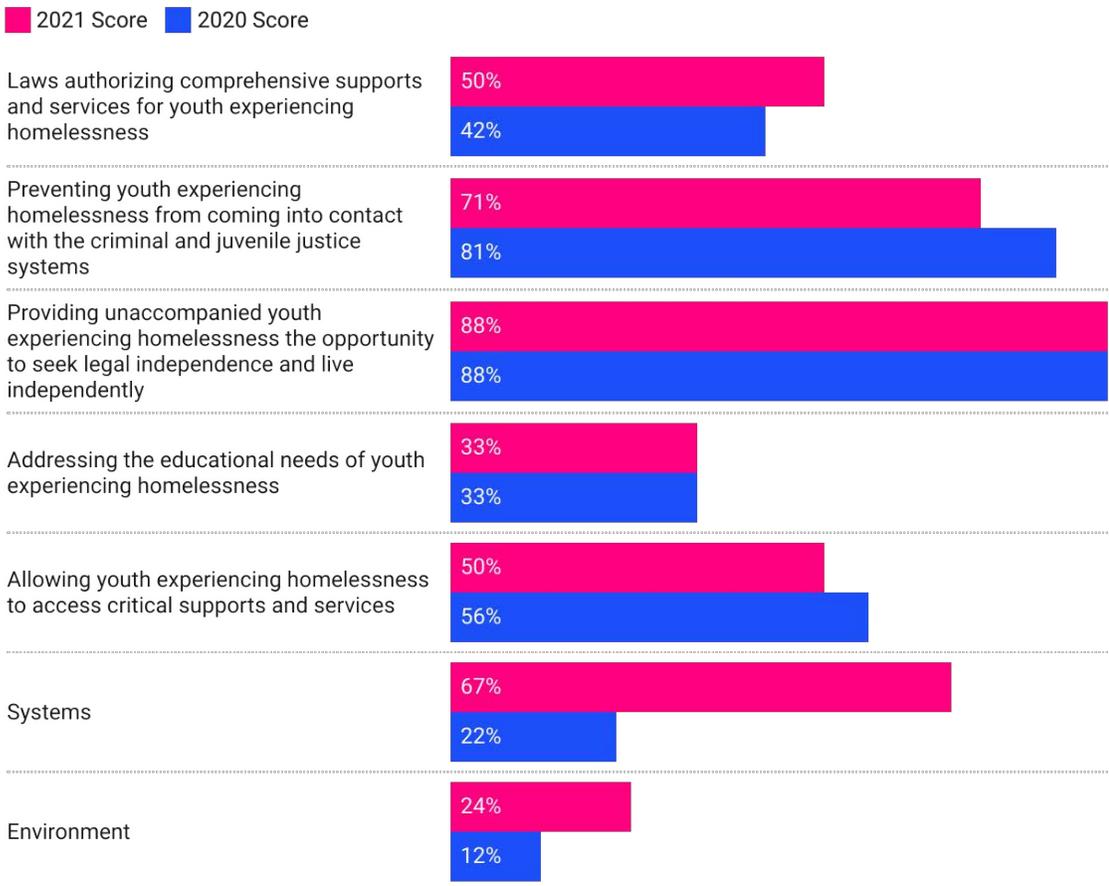
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

25

Overall score 2021:

55

Overall score 2020:

47

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

One area where **New Hampshire** has moved the needle relative to other states include minimizing opportunity for youth experiencing homelessness to come in contact with the courts.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Granite State, with emphasis on the Systems category. Protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- The state allows shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- The state gives minors contract rights OR allows them to enter into binding contracts for certain purposes (e.g. necessities).
- The state doesn't consider running away a criminal offense.



- The state should pass a law that funds and provides oversight and regulation to youth homelessness services.
- The state should explicitly allow partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
- The state should explicitly allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage without parental consent.

Systems

- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains a youth-specific strategy component.
- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.



- As part of the state plan to prevent and end youth homelessness, include a strategy to address homelessness among LGBTQ youth.
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment

- The state has banned conversion therapy for minors on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and/or expression.



- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.
- The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.

New Jersey

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

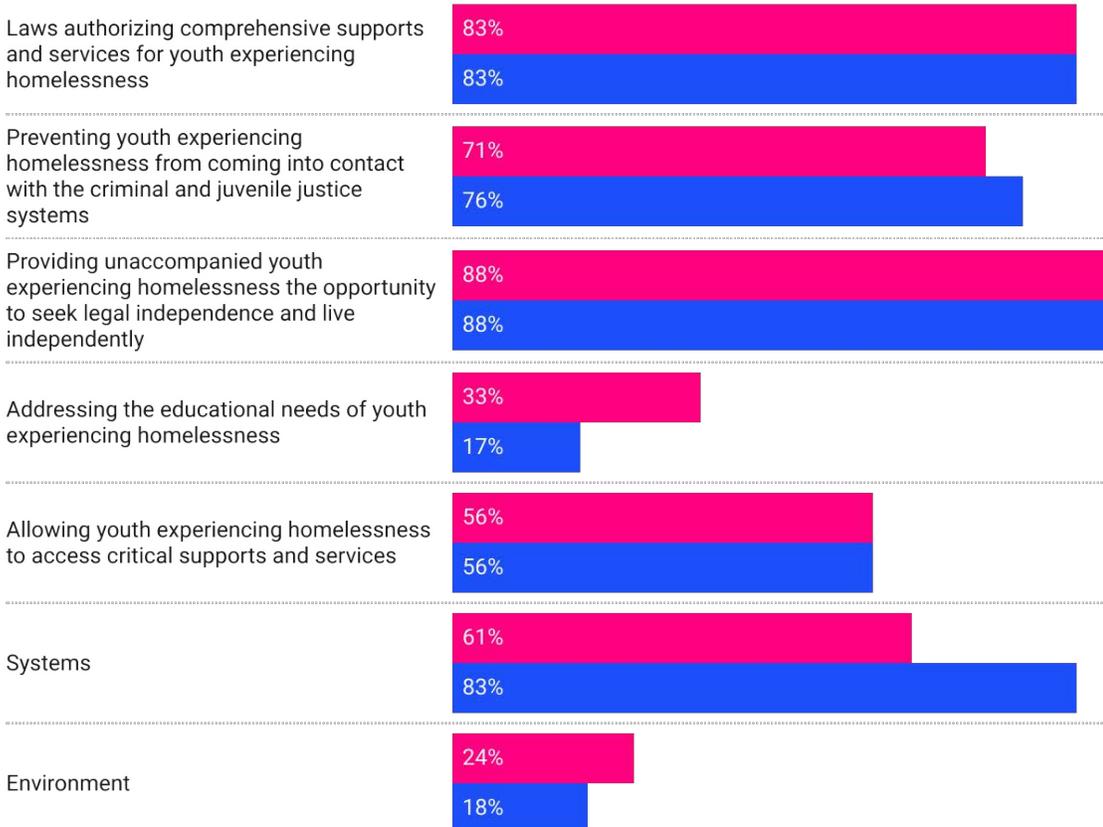
An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

■ 2021 Score ■ 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

16

Overall score 2021:

59

Overall score 2020:

62

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview



Some areas where **New Jersey** has moved the needle relative to other states include preventing youth experiencing homelessness from coming into contact with the criminal and juvenile justice systems and providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently.

There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Garden State, with emphasis on the Environment category.

Law & Policy



- The state has a law similar to the federal RHYA to provide key intervention and emergency services for youth experiencing homelessness.
- State law does not specifically criminalize running away.
- State law provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights.
- The state allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage on their own.

- The state should explicitly allow partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.

Systems



- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains a youth-specific strategy component.
- The state provides tuition waivers for foster youth.

- As part of the state plan to prevent and end youth homelessness, include a strategy to address homelessness among LGBTQ youth.
- The state should allow youth to obtain state-issued ID without parental consent.

Environment



- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in child welfare and juvenile justice programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- The state has banned conversion therapy for minors on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.

- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.
- The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.

New Mexico

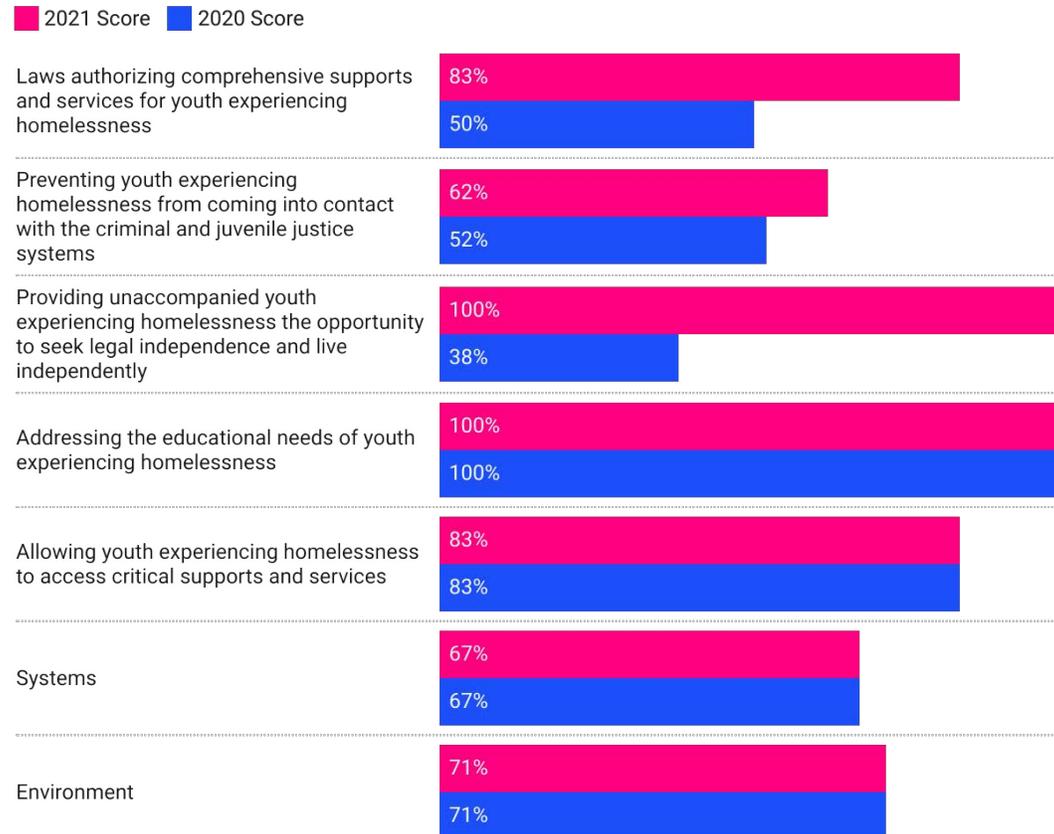
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

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This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

9

Overall score 2021:

76

Overall score 2020:

65

State Highlights	Recommendations for Improvement
<p>New Mexico has moved the needle relative to other states include providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently, addressing their educational needs, and allowing them to access critical supports and services.</p>	<p>There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Land of Enchantment, with emphasis on the Law & Policy category. Protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State law does not specifically criminalize running away. State law provides partial or full contract rights for homeless youth. The state maintains a community advisory board for youth that informs youth homelessness policy. The state allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage on their own. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enact law or regulation to allow shelters to take in youth experiencing homelessness with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains a youth-specific strategy component. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the state plan to prevent and end youth homelessness, include a strategy to address homelessness among LGBTQ youth. Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The state has banned conversion therapy for minors on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in child welfare programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The state requires training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual, development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize and maintain a self-governing youth action board or council to inform youth homelessness policy within the state.

New York

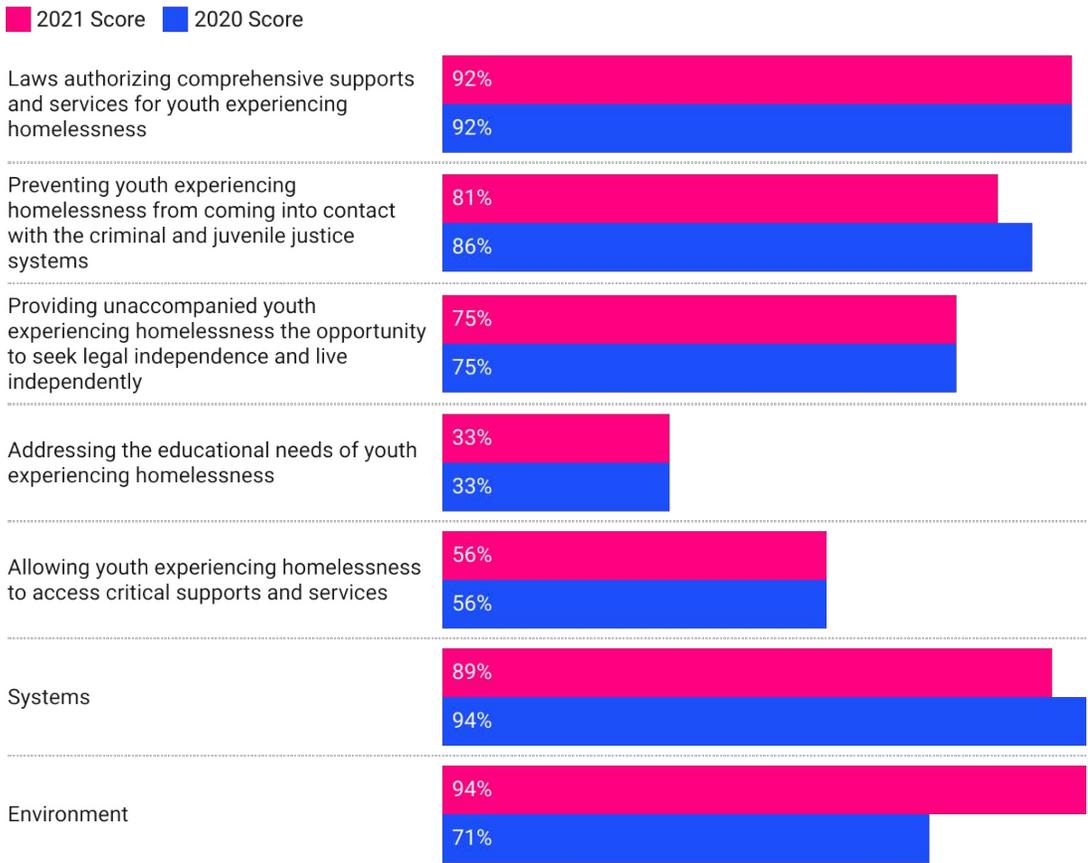
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

6

Overall score 2021:

78

Overall score 2020:

76

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

Some areas where **New York** has moved the needle relative to other states include having a state RHYA, decriminalizing youth homelessness, granting homeless youth contract rights, and promoting safety and inclusion by providing protections for LGBTQ youth within key state programs.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Empire State.

Law & Policy

- The state has RHY statutes similar to the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) that provides funding for emergency services and other supports to prevent and end youth homelessness.
- State law provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights.



- The state should explicitly allow partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
- The state should explicitly allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage (without parental consent).

Systems

- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains a youth-specific strategy component.
- There is a state entity that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.
- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.



- As part of the state plan to prevent and end youth homelessness, include a strategy to address homelessness among LGBTQ youth.
- The state should allow youth to obtain a state-issued identification card without parental consent.

Environment

- The state has banned conversion therapy for minors on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.
- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in child welfare, juvenile justice, and runaway and homeless youth programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- The state maintains a community advisory board for youth that informs youth homelessness policy.
- The state requires training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual, development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.



- The state should create a public awareness campaign/common messaging for local awareness campaigns for youth homelessness.

North Carolina

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

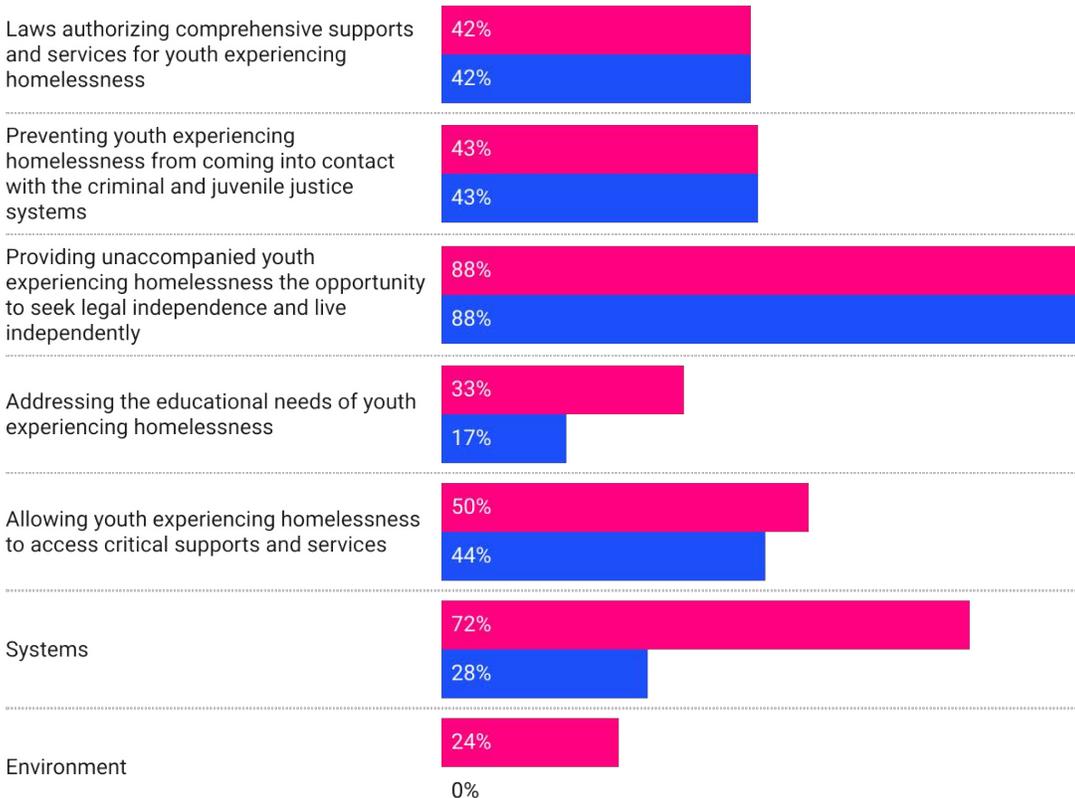
An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

2021 Score 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

33

Overall score 2021:

49

Overall score 2020:

35

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

One area where **North Carolina** has moved the needle relative to other states is in providing youth the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Tar Heel State across all categories. Enacting and funding a state RHYA law, implementing a coordinated state government response to youth homelessness, and protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- The state allows youth in foster care to access extended foster care services to age 21 under certain circumstances and allows youth who have exited the foster care system after 18 to re-enter through the age of 21.
- State law does not specifically criminalize running away.
- State law provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights.



- Enact and fund a state law similar to the federal RHYA to provide key intervention and emergency services for youth experiencing homelessness.
- The state should allow shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- The state should explicitly allow partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
- Allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage on their own.

Systems

- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains a youth-specific strategy component.
- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.
- The state provides tuition waivers for foster youth.
- Youth are able to obtain state-issued identification cards without parental consent.



- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment

- The state maintains a self-governing youth action board or council to inform youth homelessness policy within the state.



- Require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in runaway and homeless youth systems.
- Promote safe and inclusive environments in child welfare, juvenile justice, and runaway and homeless youth programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Ban harmful and ineffective service provision that includes conversion therapy.

North Dakota

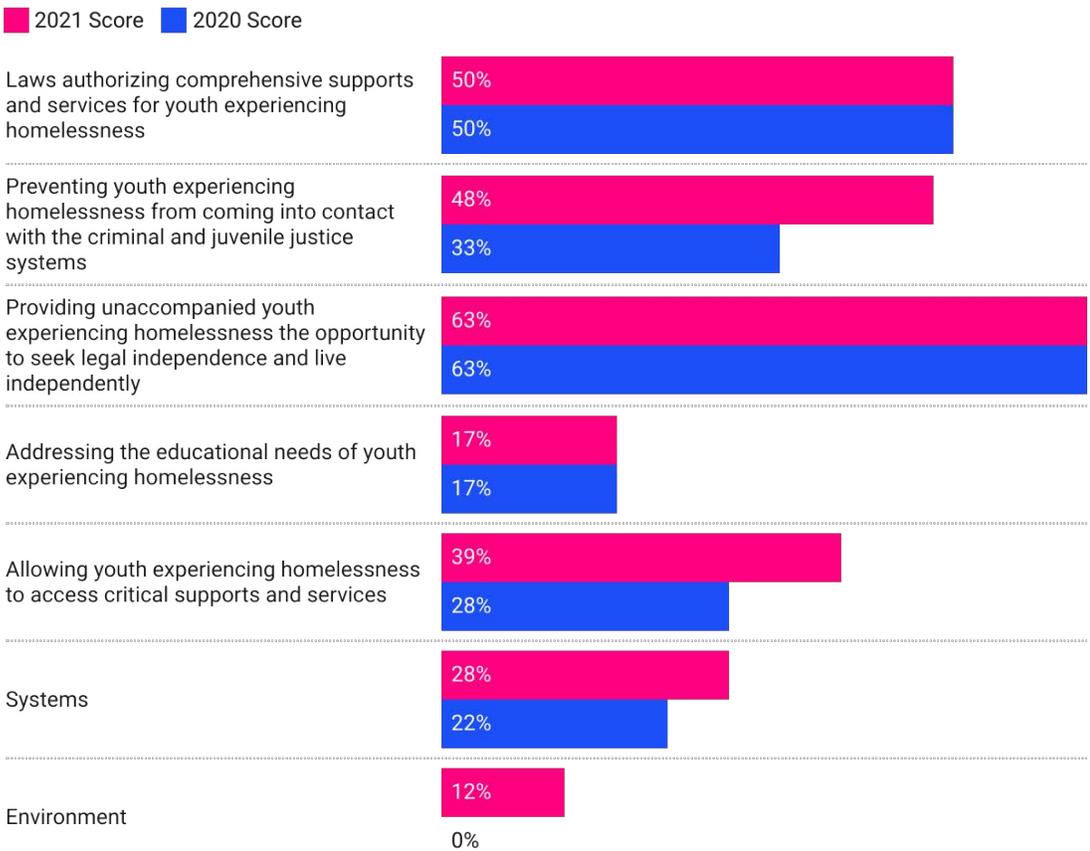
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

50

Overall score 2021:

36

Overall score 2020:

28

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

North Dakota has not moved the needle relative to other states in any key areas, but there are some individual policies worth highlighting.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Peace Garden State, with emphasis throughout all categories. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness, and protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- The state allows youth in foster care to access extended foster care services to age 21 under certain circumstances and allows youth who have exited the foster care system after 18 to re-enter through the age of 21.
- State law provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights.



- Reduce opportunities for contact between youth experiencing homelessness and the criminal and juvenile justice systems by declassifying running away as a status or delinquent offense.
- Enact a law or regulation to allow shelters to take in youth experiencing homelessness with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- The state should explicitly allow partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
- The state explicitly should allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage (without parental consent).

Systems

- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.



- The state should create and adopt a public plan to end homelessness that include a strategy to address homelessness among LGBTQ+ youth.
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment

- The state maintains a community advisory board for youth that informs youth homelessness policy.



- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.
- The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.
- Ban harmful and ineffective service provision that includes conversion therapy.

Ohio

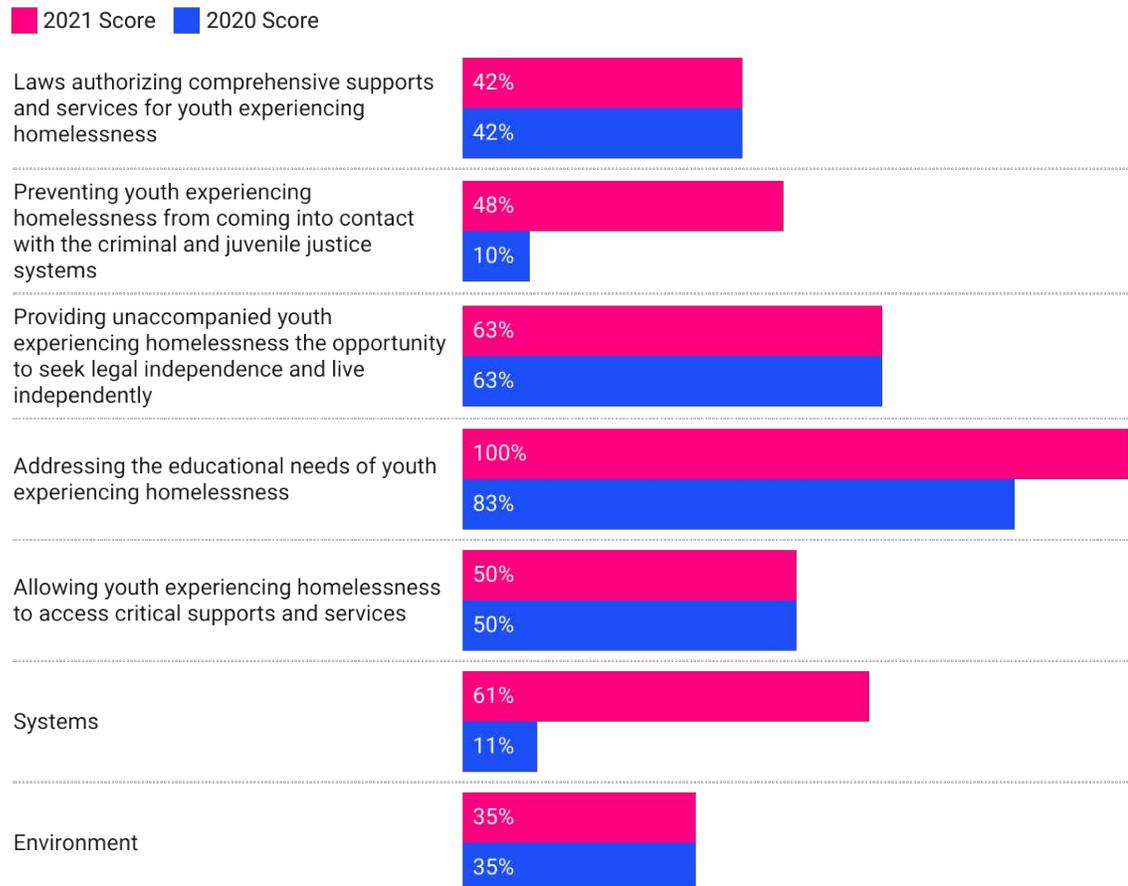
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

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This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

28

Overall score 2021:

52

Overall score 2020:

34

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

Some areas where **Ohio** has moved the needle relative to other states include providing youth the opportunity to seek legal independence, allowing youth to access critical supports and services, maintaining a multi-sector approach to ending homelessness, and promoting safety and inclusion by providing protections for LGBTQ youth within key state programs.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Buckeye State, with emphasis on the Law & Policy and Environment categories. Enacting and funding a state RHYA law, implementing a coordinated state government response to preventing and ending youth homelessness, and protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- The state allows youth in foster care to access extended foster care services to age 21 under certain circumstances and allows youth who have exited the foster care system after 18 to re-enter through the age of 21.
- State law provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights.
- The state allows youth to earn partial or alternative school credit.
- The state does not consider runaway youth as delinquent or a status offender.



- Enact and fund a state law similar to the federal RHYA to provide key intervention and emergency services for youth experiencing homelessness.
- Enact a law or regulation to allow shelters to take in youth experiencing homelessness with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- The state should explicitly allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage without parental consent.

Systems

- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that includes a youth component.
- The state provides tuition waivers for foster youth.



- The state should create and adopt a public plan to end homelessness that includes LGBTQ+ youth).
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment

- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in child welfare and juvenile justice programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.



- Organize and maintain a self-governing youth action board or council to inform youth homelessness policy within the state.
- Require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in runaway and homeless youth systems.
- Promote safe and inclusive environments in runaway and homeless youth programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Ban harmful and ineffective service provision that includes conversion therapy.

Oklahoma

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

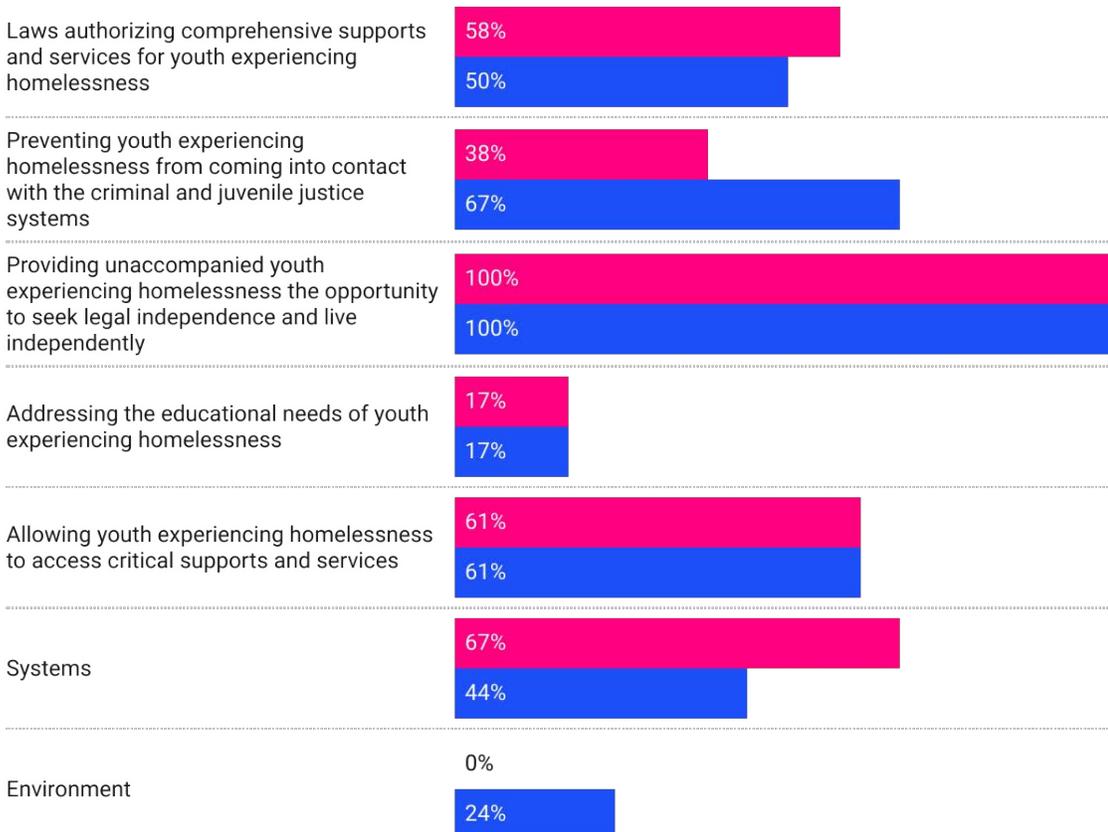
An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

2021 Score 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

39

Overall score 2021:

47

Overall score 2020:

52

State Highlights	Recommendations for Improvement
<p>Some areas where Oklahoma has moved the needle relative to other states include allowing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness to live independently.</p>	<p>Overview</p>  <p>There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Sooner State, with emphasis on the Law & Policy and Environment categories. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness, as well as protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State law provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights. The state explicitly allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage (without parental consent). The state does not consider runaway youth as delinquent or a status offender. 	<p>Law & Policy</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enact and fund a state law similar to the federal RHYA to provide key intervention and emergency services for youth experiencing homelessness. Enact state law that allows youth in need of supervision to receive services without court involvement. The state should explicitly allow partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a current state plan to end homelessness that includes a youth component. The state provides tuition waivers for foster youth. 	<p>Systems</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The state should create and adopt a public plan to end homelessness that LGBTQ+ youth. The state should create an entity – such as an Office of Youth Homelessness Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None. 	<p>Environment</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize and maintain a self-governing youth action board or council to inform youth homelessness policy within the state. Require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in runaway and homeless youth systems. Ban harmful and ineffective service provision that includes conversion therapy. The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.

Oregon

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

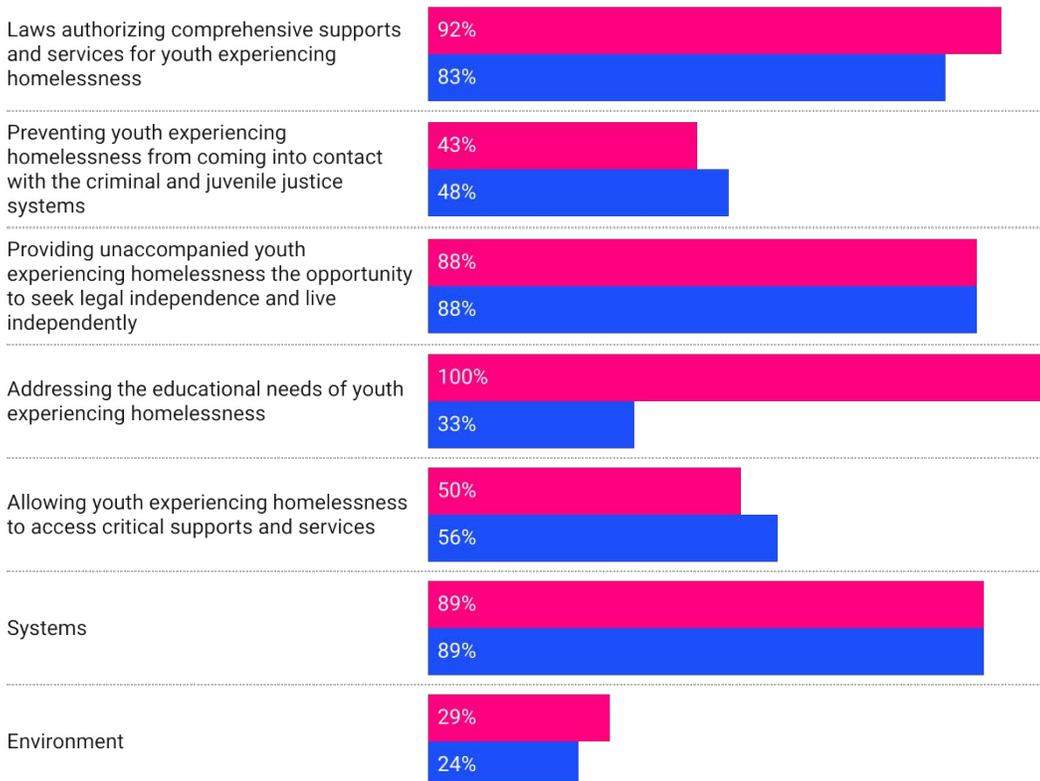
An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

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This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

■ 2021 Score ■ 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

12

Overall score 2021:

63

Overall score 2020:

59

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview



Some areas where **Oregon** has moved the needle relative to other states include providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently, minimizing barriers to their access to comprehensive supports and services, addressing their educational needs, and promoting safety and inclusion by providing protections for LGBTQ youth within key state programs.

There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Beaver State, with emphasis on the Law & Policy category. Preventing contact between youth experiencing homelessness and the criminal and juvenile justice systems should be prioritized.

Law & Policy



- The state has RHY statutes similar to the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) that provides funding for emergency services and other supports to prevent and end youth homelessness.
- State law does not specifically criminalize running away.
- State law provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights.
- The state allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage without parental consent.
- The state explicitly allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.

- Enact law or regulation to allow shelters to take in youth experiencing homelessness with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- The state should allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage without parental consent.

Systems



- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains a youth-specific component.
- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.
- The state allows youth to obtain a state-issued identification card without parental consent.
- There is a state entity (Office of homeless youth services, homeless youth state coordinator, commission on homeless youth, etc.) that focuses solely on youth homelessness.

- As part of the state plan to prevent and end youth homelessness, include a strategy to address homelessness among LGBTQ youth.

Environment



- The state has banned conversion therapy for minors on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.
- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in child welfare and juvenile justice programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

- Organize and maintain a self-governing youth action board or council to inform youth homelessness policy within the state.
- Require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in runaway and homeless youth systems.
- Promote safe and inclusive environments in runaway and homeless youth programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Pennsylvania

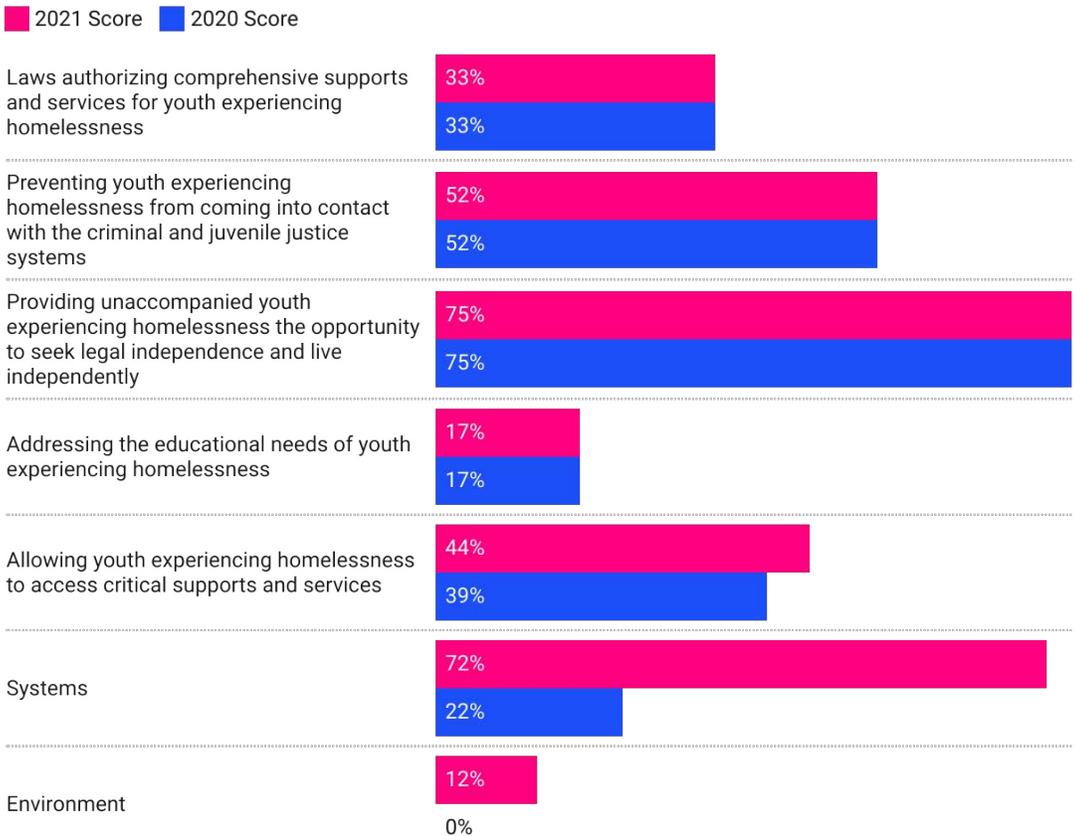
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

43

Overall score 2021:

45

Overall score 2020:

33

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

Some areas where **Pennsylvania** has moved the needle relative to other states include creating and adopting a public plan to end homelessness that includes youth and LGBTQ+ youth.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Keystone State, with emphasis on the Law & Policy and Environment categories. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness, providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently, and protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- The state allows youth in foster care to access extended foster care services to age 21 under certain circumstances and allows youth who have exited the foster care system after 18 to re-enter through the age of 21.
- The state does not consider running away a criminal offense.
- The state gives minors some contract rights.



- The state should allow shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- The state should explicitly allow partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
- Allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage on their own.
- The state should establish a process for emancipation.

Systems

- There is an interagency council on homelessness.



- Publish a comprehensive state plan to prevent and end youth homelessness, including strategies to address homelessness among LGBTQ youth.
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment

- Ending youth homelessness is a goal at the Executive branch.
- The state establishes protected class status based on one's sexual orientation and gender identity for juvenile justice programs.



- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.
- The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.

Rhode Island

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

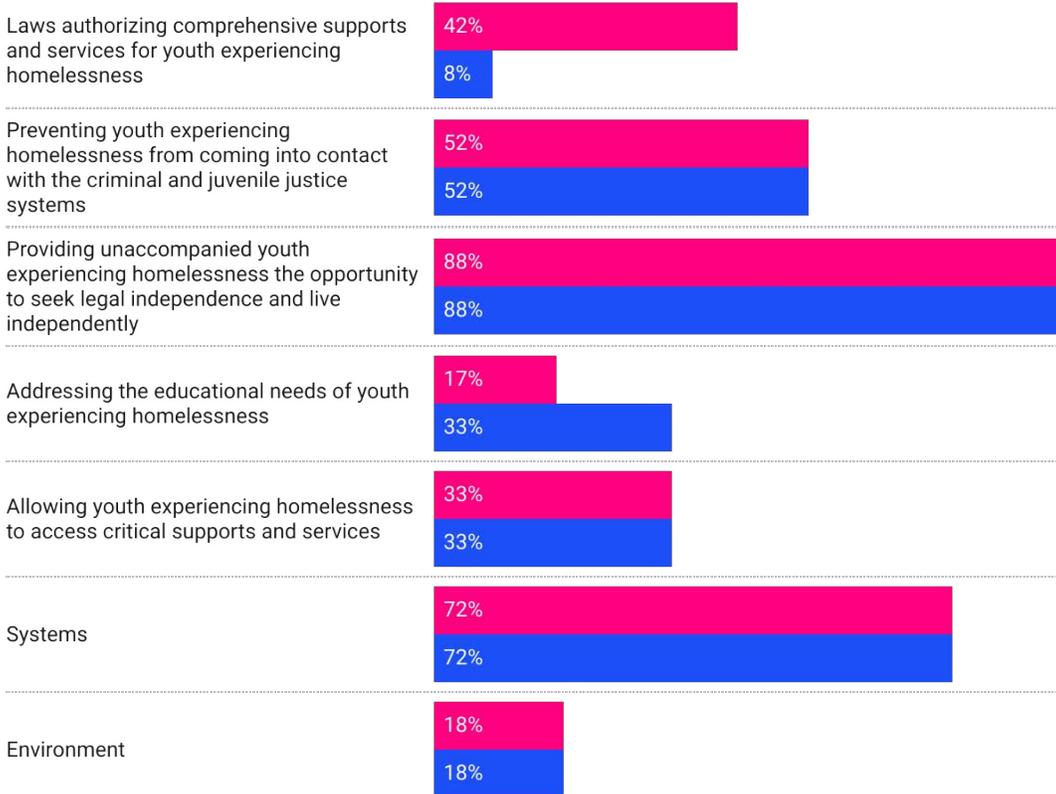
An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

■ 2021 Score ■ 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

40

Overall score 2021:

46

Overall score 2020:

43

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview



Some areas where **Rhode Island** has moved the needle relative to other states include providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently and enacting a multi-sector approach to ending homelessness.

There is room for improvement across categories in the Ocean State, with emphasis on the Law & Policy category. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness and preventing youth experiencing homelessness from coming into contact with the criminal and juvenile justice systems should be prioritized.

Law & Policy



- The state allows youth in foster care to access extended foster care services to age 21 under certain circumstances and allows youth who have exited the foster care system after 18 to re-enter through the age of 21.
- The state does not consider runaway youth as delinquent or a status offender.
- The state gives minors contract rights OR allows them to enter into binding contracts for certain purposes (e.g. necessities).
- The state explicitly allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.

- Enact and fund a state law similar to the federal RHYA to provide key intervention and emergency services for youth experiencing homelessness.
- Reduce opportunities for contact between youth experiencing homelessness and the criminal and juvenile justice systems by declassifying running away as a status or delinquent offense.
- Allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage on their own.

Systems



- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains a youth-specific strategy component.
- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.
- The state allows youth to obtain a state-issued identification card without parental consent.

- As part of the state plan to prevent and end youth homelessness, include a strategy to address homelessness among LGBTQ youth.
- Create a state entity – such as Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment



- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in child welfare and juvenile justice programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- The state has banned conversion therapy for minors on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.

- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- Require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in runaway and homeless youth systems.
- Promote safe and inclusive environments in runaway and homeless youth programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

South Carolina

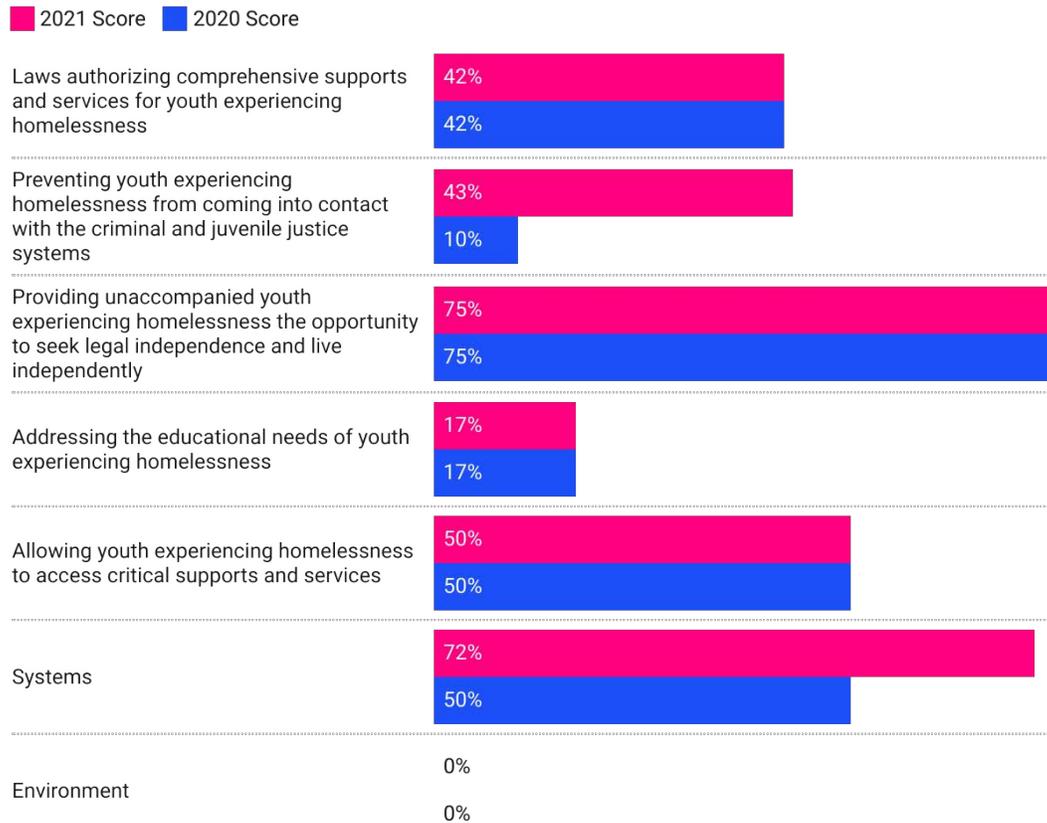
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

47

Overall score 2021:

43

Overall score 2020:

32

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview



South Carolina has moved the needle relative to other states in providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently.

There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Palmetto State, with emphasis on the Law & Policy and Environment categories. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness, addressing their educational needs, and protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy



- The state allows youth in foster care to access extended foster care services to age 21 under certain circumstances and allows youth who have exited the foster care system after 18 to re-enter within 12 months of exiting care.
- The state does not consider runaway youth as delinquent or a status offender.
- The state gives minors contract rights OR allows them to enter into binding contracts for certain purposes (e.g. necessities).

- Enact and fund a state law similar to the federal RHYA to provide key intervention and emergency services for youth experiencing homelessness.
- Reduce opportunities for contact between youth experiencing homelessness and the criminal and juvenile justice systems by declassifying running away as a status or delinquent offense.
- Allow shelters to take in youth experiencing homelessness with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- Allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage on their own.
- Allow partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.

Systems



- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that has a youth component.
- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.
- Youth can obtain a state-issued identification card without parental consent.

- The state should create and adopt a public plan to end homelessness that includes LGBTQ+ youth.
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment



- None.

- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.
- The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.

South Dakota

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

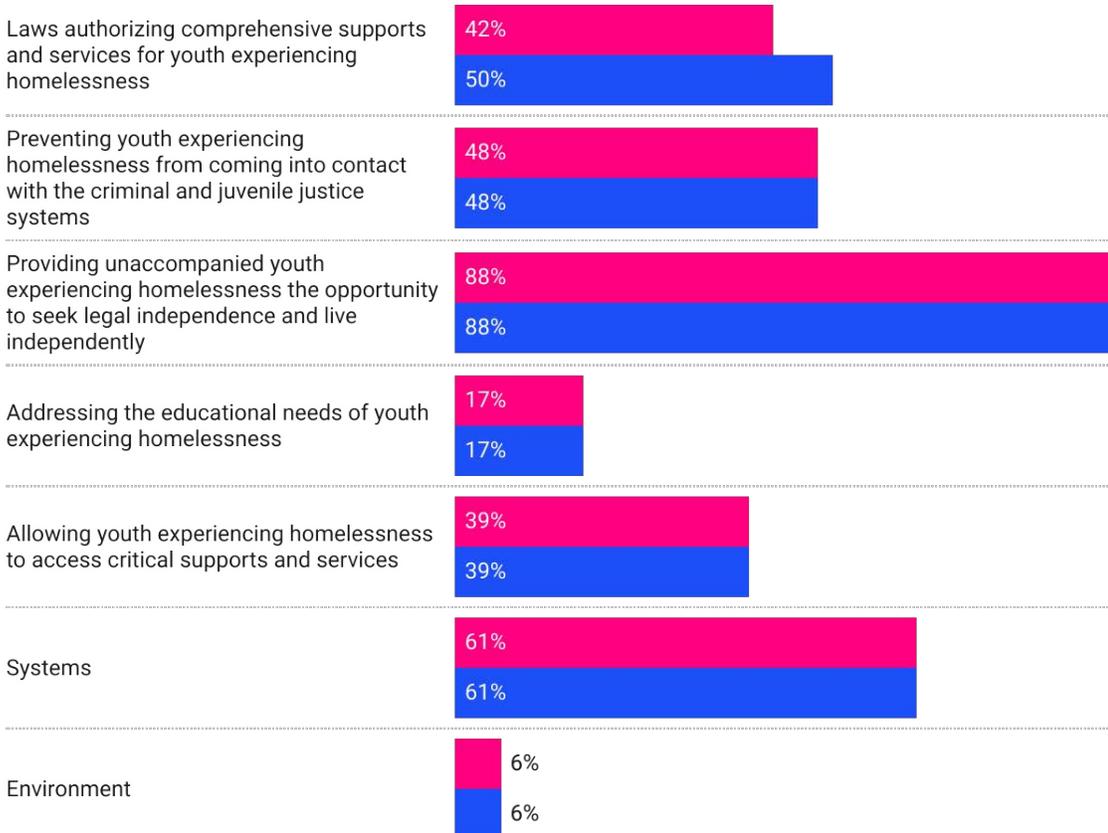
An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

2021 Score 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

49

Overall score 2021:

42

Overall score 2020:

43

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

One area where **South Dakota** has moved the needle relative to other states is in providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently.



There is room for improvement in the Mount Rushmore State across each category. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness, addressing their educational needs, and protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- The state allows youth in foster care to access extended foster care services to age 21 under limited circumstances.
- State law provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights.
- The state doesn't consider running away a criminal offense.



- The state should pass a law that funds and provides oversight and regulation to youth homelessness services.
- The state should allow shelters to take in youth experiencing homelessness with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- The state should explicitly allow partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
- The state should explicitly allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage without parental consent.

Systems

- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains a youth-specific strategy component.



- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.
- Create an Interagency Council on Homelessness that mirrors the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), providing a multi-sectoral approach to preventing and ending youth homelessness.

Environment

- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in child welfare programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.



- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.
- The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.

Tennessee

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

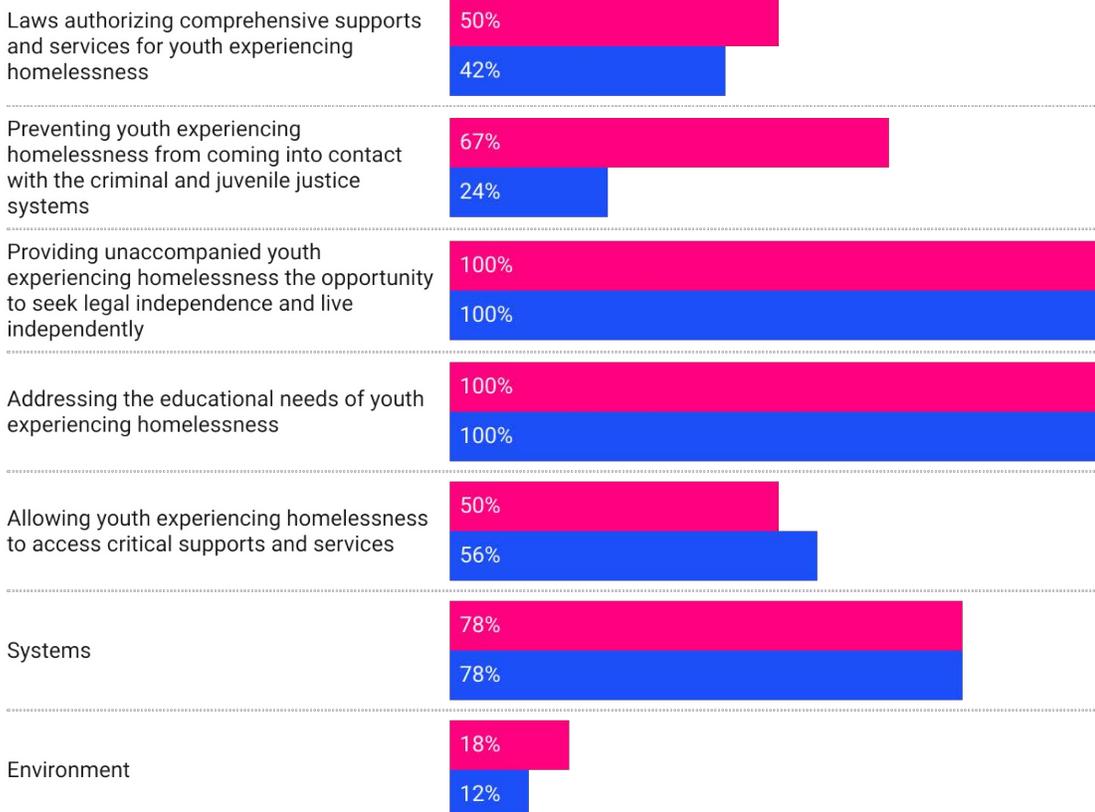
An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

2021 Score 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

14

Overall score 2021:

60

Overall score 2020:

50

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

Some areas where **Tennessee** has moved the needle relative to other states include providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently and addressing the educational needs of youth experiencing homelessness.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Volunteer State, with emphasis on the Law & Policy and Environment categories. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness and protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- State law does not specifically criminalize running away.
- State law provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights.
- The state allows shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- The state explicitly allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.



- The state should explicitly allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage without parental consent.
- The state should provide transportation home after discharge from the juvenile justice system.
- The state should explicitly allow homeless youth to use SNAP to buy hot restaurant or prepared meals.

Systems

- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains a youth-specific strategy component.
- There is a state entity that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.



- As part of the state plan to prevent and end youth homelessness, include a strategy to address homelessness among LGBTQ+ youth.
- The State Department of Transportation should put systems in place to address proof of residency requirements to receive a state-issued ID card and allow minors to obtain state-issued ID without parental consent.

Environment

- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in child welfare and juvenile justice programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.



- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.
- The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.

Texas

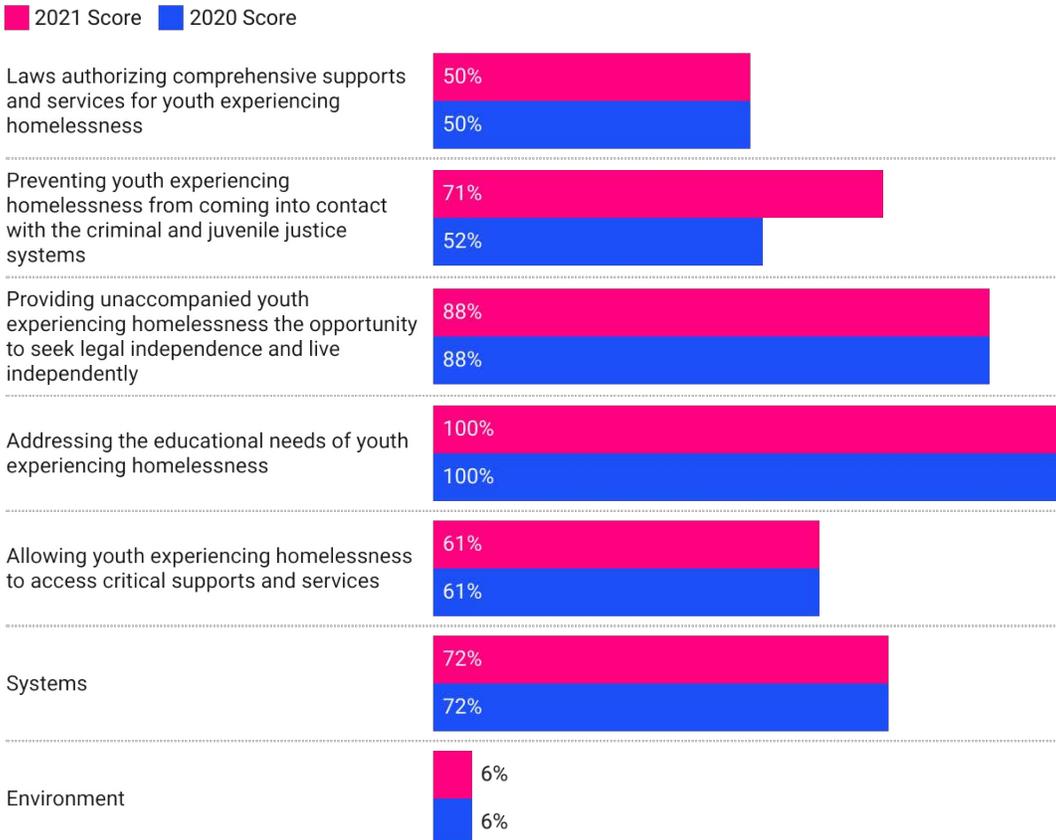
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

16

Overall score 2021:

59

Overall score 2020:

55

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

Some areas where **Texas** has moved the needle relative to other states include providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently and addressing the educational needs of youth experiencing homelessness.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Lone Star State, with emphasis on the Law & Policy and Environment categories. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness and protecting their rights and interests, including the rights and interests of LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- The state allows youth in foster care to access extended foster care services to age 21 under certain circumstances and allows youth who have exited the foster care system after 18 to re-enter care before 20 years and 11 months of age.
- State law provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights.
- The state explicitly allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
- The state allows shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.



- Allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage on their own.
- The state should explicitly allow homeless youth to use SNAP to buy hot restaurant or prepared meals.

Systems

- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that includes a youth component.
- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.
- The state provides tuition waivers to foster youth.



- Expand the state plan to prevent and end homelessness to include strategies to address homelessness among LGBTQ youth.
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment

- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in juvenile justice programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.



- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.
- The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.
- The state should ban conversion therapy for minors on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Utah

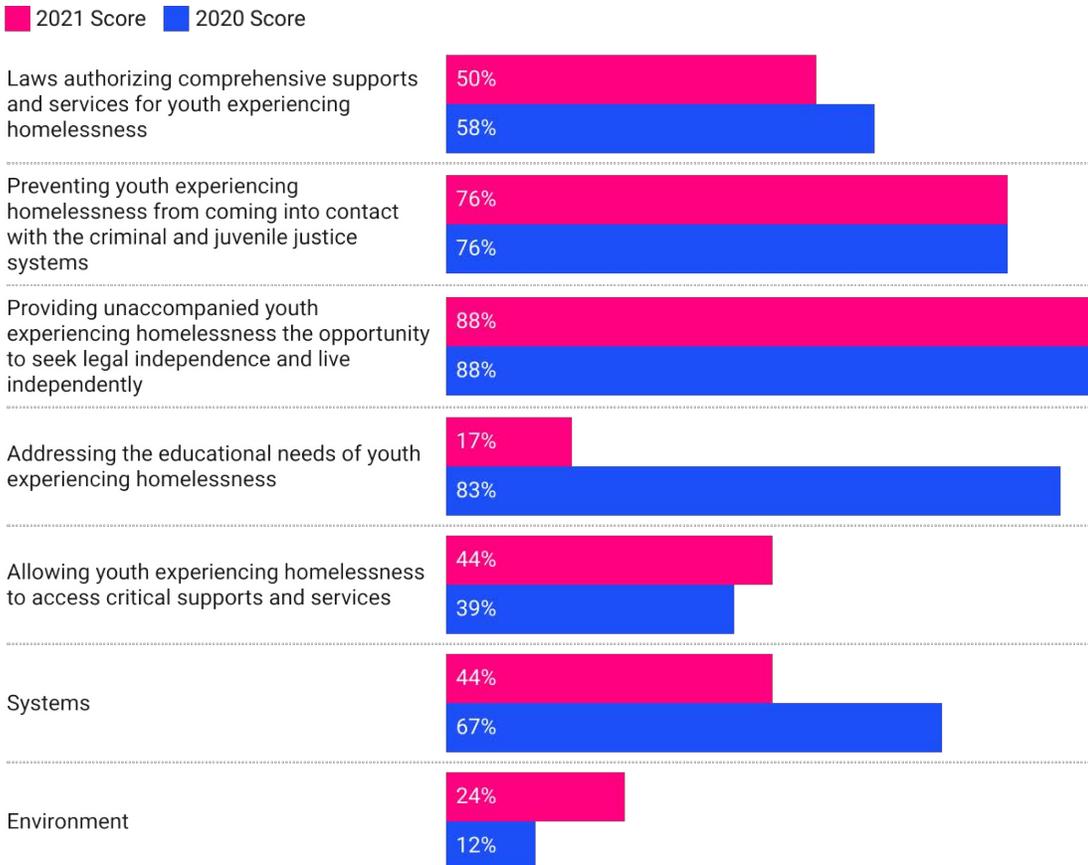
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

31

Overall score 2021:

50

Overall score 2020:

56

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview



Some areas where **Utah** has moved the needle relative to other states include providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently and addressing the educational needs of youth experiencing homelessness.

There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Beehive State, with emphasis on the Law & Policy and Environment categories. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness and protecting their rights and interests, including the rights and interests of LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy



- State law provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights for homeless youth.
- State law does not specifically criminalize running away.
- The state allows youth in foster care to access extended foster care services to age 21 under any circumstances and allows youth who have exited the foster care system after 18 to re-enter care until age 21.
- The state allows shelters to take in youth experiencing homelessness with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.

- Enact and fund a state law similar to the federal RHYA to provide key intervention and emergency services for youth experiencing homelessness.
- The state should explicitly allow partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
- Allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage on their own.

Systems



- There is a current state plan to end homelessness.
- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.

- As part of the state plan to prevent and end youth homelessness, include a strategy to address homelessness among LGBTQ youth.
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment



- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in child welfare programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.
- The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.

Vermont

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

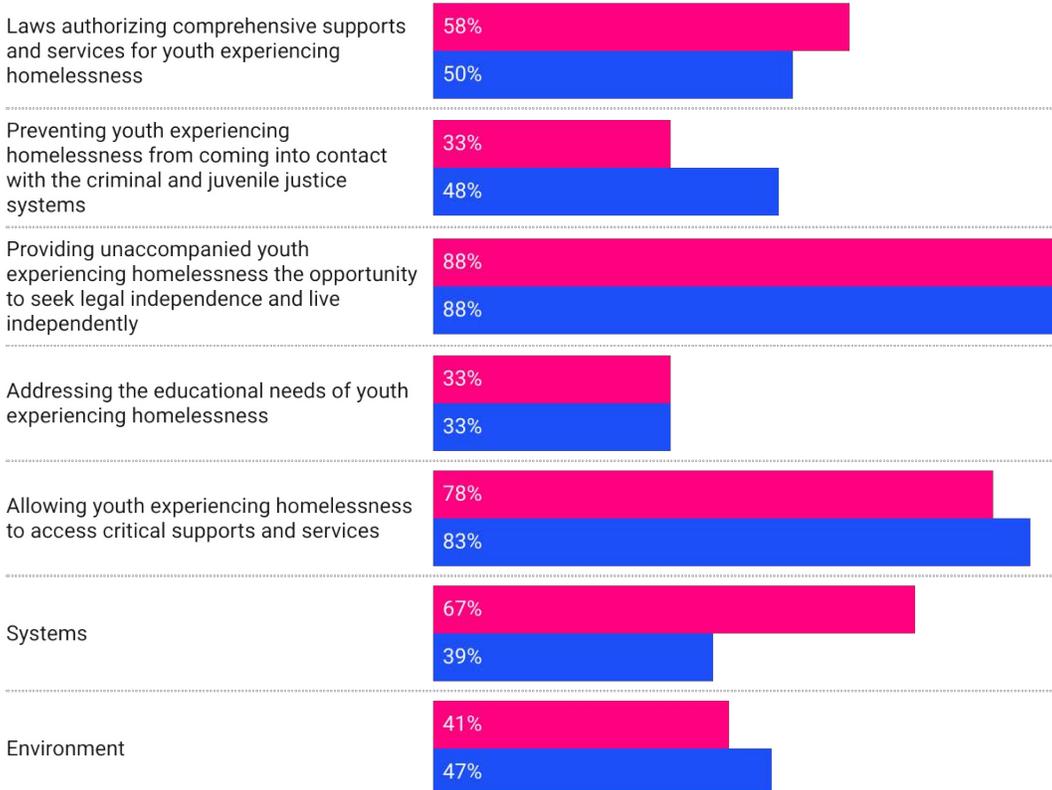
An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

■ 2021 Score ■ 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

21

Overall score 2021:

56

Overall score 2020:

55

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

Some areas where **Vermont** has moved the needle relative to other states include providing unaccompanied youth opportunities to seek legal independence, allowing access to critical supports and services, and protecting the rights of LGBTQ youth within key state programs.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Green Mountain State, with emphasis on the Law & Policy and Environment categories. Educational needs of youth experiencing homelessness should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- The state allows youth in foster care to access extended foster care services to age 22 under any circumstances and allows youth who have exited the foster care system after 16 to re-enter care until age 22.
- Unaccompanied youth under 18 years of age can apply for health insurance coverage without parental consent.
- Truant youth are not classified as a status offenders or delinquents.



- Enact and fund a state law similar to the federal RHYA to provide key intervention and emergency services for youth experiencing homelessness.
- Allow shelters to take in youth experiencing homelessness with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- The state should explicitly allow partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.

Systems

- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains a youth-specific strategy component.
- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.



- As part of the state plan to prevent and end youth homelessness, include a strategy to address homelessness among LGBTQ youth.
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.
- Remove barriers to obtaining a state-issued identification cards, including parental consent and proof of residency requirements.

Environment

- There is a state-level Youth Action Board of youth with lived experience of homelessness who inform state policymaking on youth homelessness.
- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in child welfare and juvenile justice programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- The state has banned conversion therapy for minors on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.



- Require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in runaway and homeless youth systems.
- The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.

Virginia

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

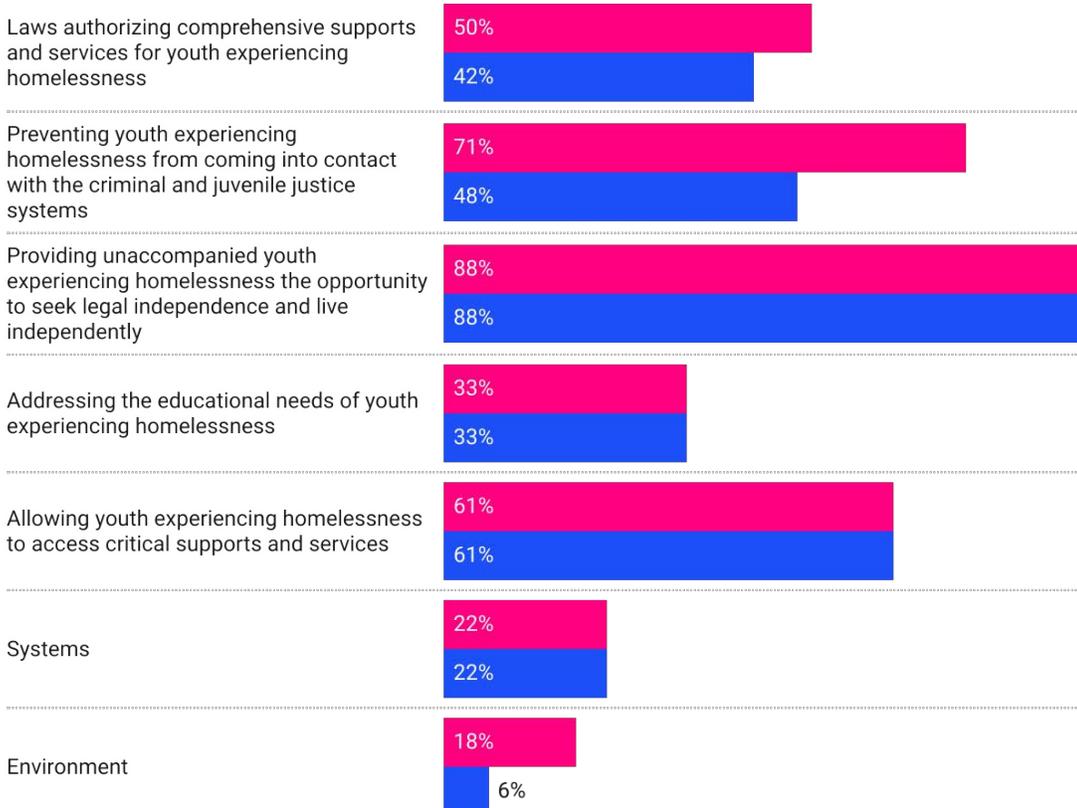
An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

■ 2021 Score ■ 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

36

Overall score 2021:

48

Overall score 2020:

40

State Highlights

Recommendations
for Improvement

Overview

Virginia has moved the needle relative to other states in providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Old Dominion State, with emphasis on the Law & Policy and Environment categories. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness and protecting the rights and interests of youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- The state allows youth in foster care to access extended foster care services to age 21 under some circumstances and allows eligible youth who have exited the foster care system after 18 to re-enter care until age 21.
- State law does not specifically criminalize running away.
- State law provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights.
- The state allows shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.



- The state should explicitly allow partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
- The state should explicitly allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage without parental consent.
- The state should explicitly allow homeless youth to use SNAP to buy hot restaurant or prepared meals.

Systems

- The state provides tuition waivers for foster youth.
- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.



- The state should create and adopt a public plan to end homelessness that includes youth (and specifically LGBTQ+ youth).
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment

- The state establishes protected class status based on one's sexual orientation and gender identity for juvenile justice programs.



- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- The state should require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.
- The state should establish nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ youth in youth homelessness services.

Washington

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

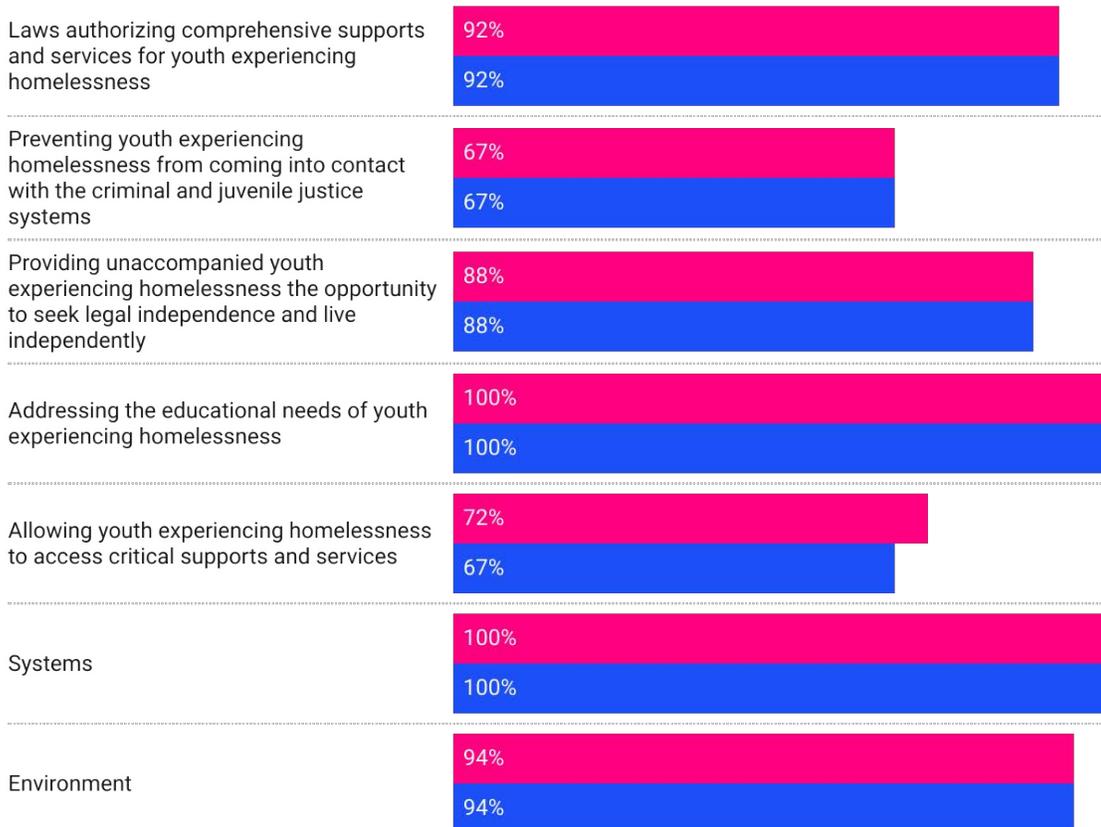
An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:

■ 2021 Score ■ 2020 Score



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

2

Overall score 2021

85

Overall score 2020:

84

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

Some areas where **Washington** has moved the needle relative to other states include laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness, addressing the educational needs of youth experiencing homelessness, and promoting safety and inclusion by providing protections for LGBTQ youth within key state programs.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Evergreen State, with emphasis on limiting youth's contact with the criminal and juvenile justice systems.

Law & Policy

- The state has RHY statutes similar to the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) that provides funding for emergency services and other supports to prevent and end youth homelessness.
- The state allows youth in foster care to access extended foster care services to age 21 under some circumstances and allows eligible youth who have exited the foster care system after 18 to re-enter care until age 21.
- State law provides youth experiencing homelessness some contract rights.
- The state allows shelters to take in youth experiencing homelessness with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- The state explicitly allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for youth experiencing homelessness.
- The state allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage on their own.



- Reduce opportunities for contact between youth experiencing homelessness and the criminal and juvenile justice systems by declassifying running away as a status or delinquent offense.
- Provide greater support to youth transitioning out of the juvenile justice system, including transition planning that specifically addresses housing needs, custody after discharge, and youth permanency.

Systems

- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains youth and LGBTQ+ specific strategy components.
- The state has created an entity that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.
- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.



- None.

Environment

- The state has banned conversion therapy for minors on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.
- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in child welfare and juvenile justice programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- The state requires training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual, development or issues specific to LGBTQ+ youth for staff working in RHY Systems.



- The state should create a public awareness campaign/ common messaging for local awareness campaigns for youth homelessness.

West Virginia

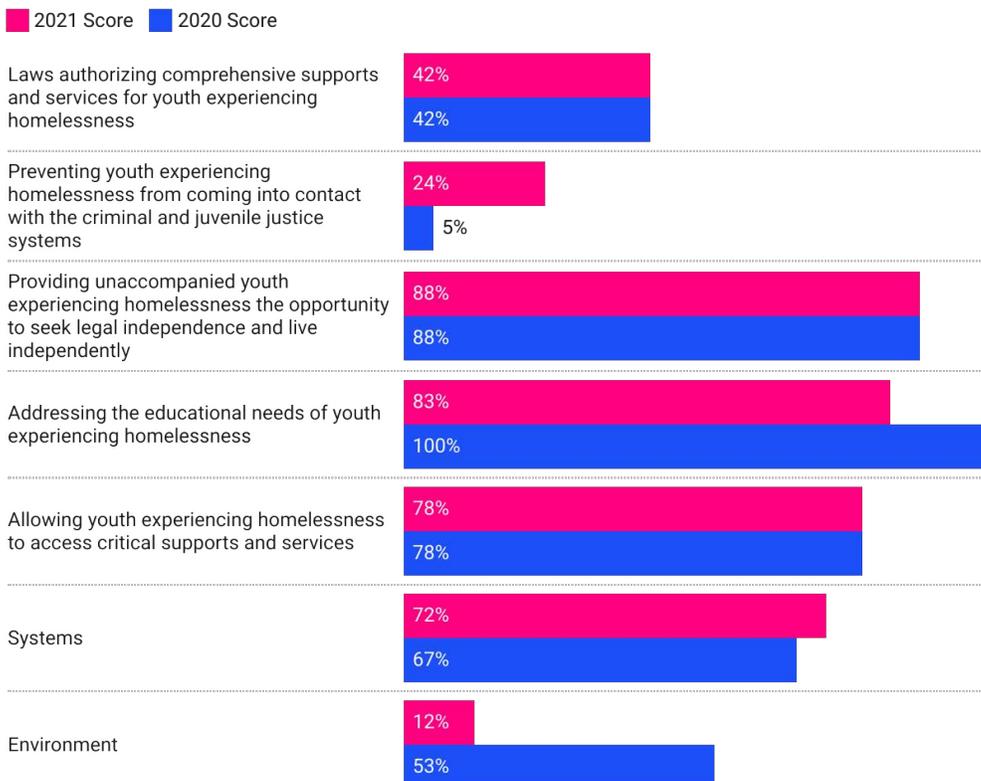
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

29

Overall score 2021:

51

Overall score 2020:

54

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

Some areas where **West Virginia** has moved the needle relative to other states include providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and to access critical supports and services.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Mountain State, with emphasis on the Law & Policy and Environment categories. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness, preventing homeless youth's contact with the criminal and juvenile justice systems, and protecting the rights and interests of LGBTQ youth should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- The state allows youth in foster care to access extended foster care services to age 21 under some circumstances and allows eligible youth who have exited the foster care system after 18 to re-enter care until age 20.
- State law provides partial or full contract rights for homeless youth.
- The state explicitly allows partial and alternative school credit accrual for homeless youth through regulations.
- The state allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage without parental consent.



- Enact and fund a state law similar to the federal RHYA to provide key intervention and emergency services for youth experiencing homelessness.
- Allow shelters to take in youth experiencing homelessness with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- The state should remove laws or regulations that prevent access to higher education for homeless youth.
- The state should explicitly allow homeless youth to use SNAP to buy hot restaurant or prepared meals.

Systems

- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains a youth-specific strategy component.
- There is a state interagency council on homelessness.



- As part of the state plan to prevent and end youth homelessness, include a strategy to address homelessness among LGBTQ youth.
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.

Environment

- The state promotes safe and inclusive environments in child welfare and runaway and homeless youth programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.



- The state should establish and maintain stipends for a community advisory board that informs youth homelessness policy (Youth Action Board).
- Promote safe and inclusive environments in juvenile justice programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Ban harmful and ineffective service provision that includes conversion therapy.

Wisconsin

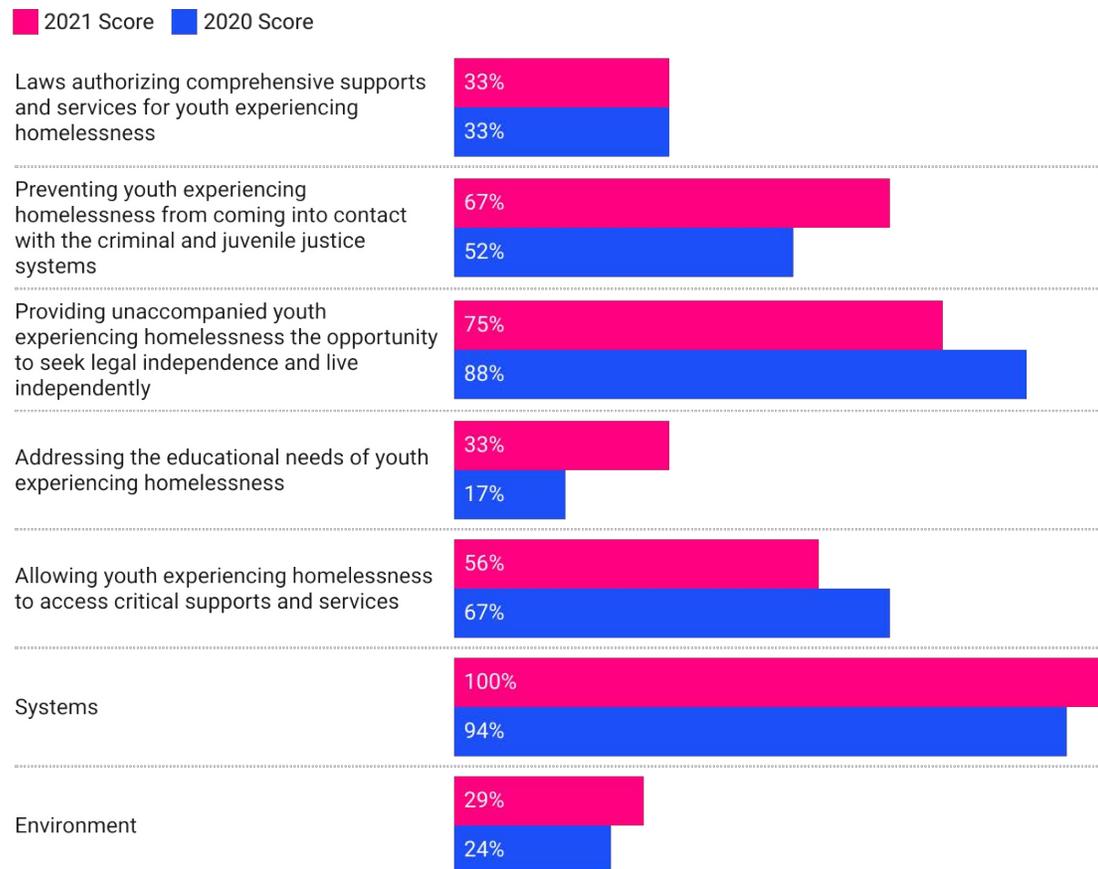
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

16

Overall score 2021:

59

Overall score 2020:

56

State Highlights	Recommendations for Improvement
<p>Wisconsin has moved the needle relative to other states in allowing youth experiencing homelessness access to critical supports and services and building systems to comprehensively address homelessness.</p>	<p>Overview</p>  <p>There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Badger State, with emphasis on the Law & Policy and Environment categories. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness and protecting the rights and interests of LGBTQ+ youth should be prioritized.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The state allows youth in foster care to access extended foster care services to age 21 under some circumstances and allows eligible youth who have exited the foster care system after 18 to re-enter care until age 21. The state allows shelters to take in youth experiencing homelessness with a delay or waiver of notification requirements. The state does not consider runaway youth as delinquent or a status offender. The state gives minors contract rights OR allows them to enter into binding contracts for certain purposes (e.g. necessities). 	<p>Law & Policy</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enact and fund a state law similar to the federal RHYA to provide key intervention and emergency services for youth experiencing homelessness. Allow partial and alternative school credit accrual for youth experiencing homelessness. The state should explicitly allow unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage (without parental consent).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains a youth and LGBTQ+ specific strategy component. There is a state interagency council on homelessness. The state does not require parental consent for youth to obtain state-issued identification cards. 	<p>Systems</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The state maintains a community advisory board for youth that informs youth homelessness policy. The state establishes protected class status based on one's sexual orientation and gender identity for juvenile justice programs. 	<p>Environment</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in runaway and homeless youth systems. Promote safe and inclusive environments in child welfare, juvenile justice, and runaway and homeless youth programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Ban harmful and ineffective service provision that includes conversion therapy.

Wyoming

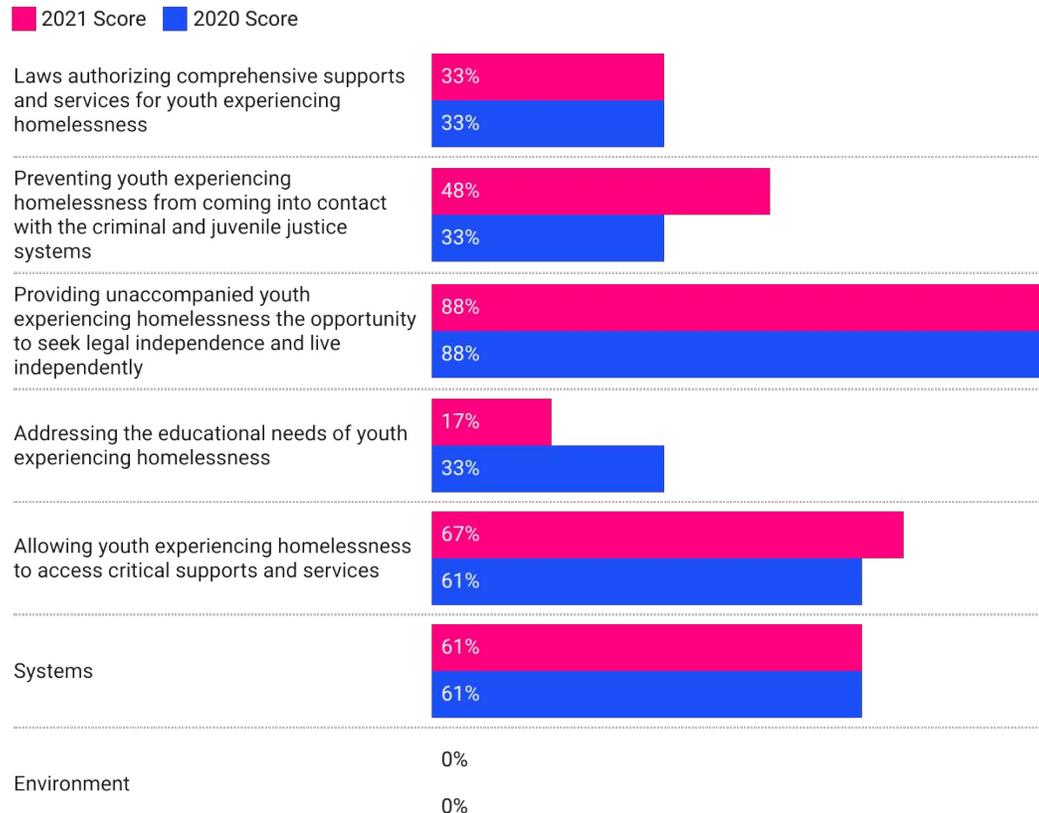
Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

An estimated 4.2 million youth and young adults up to age 24 experience homelessness each year in the United States. Youth experiencing homelessness — particularly those who are unaccompanied — face numerous challenges, which can include legal barriers to meeting their basic needs and accessing services. Every level of government has a role in removing these barriers, addressing the challenges youth are facing, and ultimately ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

The State Index on Youth Homelessness (the Index) provides a snapshot of some of the legal, systemic, and environmental barriers faced by youth experiencing homelessness on the state level. The Index also provides state officials, advocates, grassroots activists, and youth themselves with recommended steps that states can take to protect the safety, development, health, and dignity of youth experiencing homelessness, thereby helping end the cycle of homelessness and growing opportunity for young people to achieve positive outcomes.

This scorecard evaluates the state based on 61 metrics assigning points up to 100. For a complete list of metrics, see Appendix A.

Performance Breakdown:



Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

43

Overall score 2021:

45

Overall score 2020:

42

State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

Overview

Wyoming has moved the needle relative to other states in providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently.



There is room for improvement throughout the metrics for the Equality State, throughout the Law & Policy, Systems, and Environment categories. Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness, allowing youth experiencing homelessness to access critical supports and services, and protecting the rights and interests of LGBTQ youth should be prioritized.

Law & Policy

- State law does not specifically criminalize running away.
- State law provides partial or full contract rights for homeless youth.
- The state explicitly allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage (without parental consent).



- Enact and fund a state law similar to the federal RHYA to provide key intervention and emergency services for youth experiencing homelessness.
- Allow shelters to take in youth experiencing homelessness with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- Allow partial and alternative school credit accrual for youth experiencing homelessness.

Systems

- There is a current state plan to end homelessness that contains a youth-specific strategy component.



- As part of the state plan to prevent and end youth homelessness, include a strategy to address homelessness among LGBTQ youth.
- Create a state entity – such as an Office of Homeless Youth Services – that focuses solely on designing, implementing, and evaluating youth homelessness programs.
- Create an Interagency Council on Homelessness that mirrors the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), providing a multi-sector approach to preventing and ending youth homelessness.

Environment

- None.



- Organize and maintain a self-governing youth action board or council to inform youth homelessness policy within the state.
- Require training about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, healthy sexual development, or issues specific to LGBTQ youth for staff working in runaway and homeless youth systems.
- Promote safe and inclusive environments in child welfare, juvenile justice, and runaway and homeless youth programs by providing protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Ban harmful and ineffective service provision that includes conversion therapy.

