

# Report: Over 12,000 Students are Homeless in VA

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The number of students in Virginia who have no place to call home has been on the rise. A recent study by the national family advocacy group First Focus shows a 29 percent increase in homeless students in The Commonwealth since 2006, a jump that equates to more than 12,000 kids.

Phyllis Chamberlain, executive director of the Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness, attributes the uptick to the poor economy. She says there are many misconceptions about what it actually means to be homeless – and it doesn't always mean people are living on the streets or in emergency shelters.

"What you're more likely to see are families who are 'doubled up' because they have nowhere else to live and can't afford to live on their own. Those are the families that we often don't see, because they're not on the street."

Dr. Patricia Popp is the state coordinator for the education of homeless children and youth, also known as Project Hope Virginia. She says multiple services are available to students, such as tutoring and help with transportation, because the routine of just getting to school can sometimes be disrupted when a family is forced to relocate.

"You've got children who don't have the normally required materials for school, whether its notebooks and pencils or other kinds of school equipment, and those pieces can be provided; and some case management, connecting students with outside services that their families may need as well."

Federal law allows homeless students to stay in their schools, even if they are forced to move outside their school district when their family loses its home.