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Advancing Educational Stability, Continuity, and Success: A Policy Agenda for Highly Mobile Youth in the U.S.

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<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8tw681qs>

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Publication Date

2025-04-30

Data Availability

The data associated with this publication are available upon request.

Peer reviewed

Youth in Foster Care

Youth Involved in the Juvenile Legal System

Advancing Educational Stability, Continuity, and Success:

A Policy Agenda for Highly Mobile Youth in the U.S.

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of Schools**

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Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Migrant Youth



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Acknowledgments

This joint research brief was produced with the generous support of The Fund for Education Success (FES), a collaboration between the Raikes Foundation, the Stuart Foundation, and the Walter S. Johnson Foundation. It was designed and edited by Geneva Sum, Communications Director for the UCLA Center for the Transformation of Schools (CTS). The authors also thank CTS colleagues Mayra Cazares Minero, Hui Huang, and Jacqueline Rodio for their contributions to the research. This report benefited from the insights and expertise of Joe Herrity, Program Officer for the Stuart Foundation, and Alexia Everett, Senior Manager of Partnerships for the Stuart Foundation.



Suggested Citation: Bishop, J.P., & Willis, J. (2025). *Advancing Educational Stability, Continuity, and Success: A Policy Agenda for Highly Mobile Youth in the U.S.* Center for the Transformation of Schools, School of Education & Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles; WestEd.

HIGHLY MOBILE YOUTH IN THE UNITED STATES: COVID & A SHIFTING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Highly mobile youth (HMY), include approximately 1.9 million school-age students in the US¹, a broad category for students experiencing homelessness (1.2 million students; National Center for Homeless Education, 2022), the foster care system (391,000), migrant youth (274,000) and young people who have been detained in the juvenile legal system (25,000).

2022 is the most recent year with available data for all four student communities and the main year referenced in a recent study in a series on HMY (Cazares-Minero et al., 2025). HMY represent approximately 3% of the U.S. population under age 18 (73 million; Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2023). Education systems struggle to support the educational stability and stability of HMY because of their movement across districts, counties, states and national boundaries. All four student communities have historically been underserved in public education systems with comparatively poor education outcomes to youth not impacted by the same systems (Parrott et al., 2022; Kennedy et al., 2023; Gilman et al., 2021; Emery et al., 2020).

HMY often attend schools or interface with agencies in some of the most under-resourced, racially segregated, and economically unstable communities in the country (Fahle et al., 2021). These realities underscore that no one single system is equipped to shoulder the responsibility of educating HMY alone (Bishop, 2023). Rather, a carefully coordinated system of partnerships, policies, and structures are required to work in tandem, an idea we explore further in this paper. More examples of these collective impact strategies centered on young people are surfacing across the U.S., from Oakland and Oregon to Georgia and Tennessee, often fragile partnerships without backing of consistent policy support and public investments (Riehl et al., 2019; Henig et al., 2016).

The majority of HMY are students of color, youth overrepresented in rates of chronic absenteeism nationally and in patterns examining the effects of the pandemic on student learning outcomes (Conry & Richards, 2018; Anderson 2020; Gee, 2018; Gottfried, 2014). These trends are closely linked to structural and environmental inequalities that economically disadvantaged students and students of color frequently encounter (Singer et al., 2021).

This paper, which explores federal and state policies to support HMY, is released during a period of significant educational, social, and political upheaval. As one-time federal and state COVID-19 relief investments are in the rearview mirror of local and state agencies, a possible “fiscal cliff” looms, compounding alarming rates of educational and student health deficits and creating an urgent moral imperative for policymakers (Pitts et al., 2023).

The second-term of President Trump, coupled with the litany of executive orders issued during his first months back in office, signals a continuation—and potential escalation—of policies that pose challenges for an already vulnerable youth population. His administration’s early actions—including stricter immigration policies, rollbacks on protections for marginalized communities, and reductions in federal education and social welfare funding—suggest that youth from immigrant families, low-income backgrounds, and historically marginalized

¹ During the 2021–2022 school year, there were approximately 1,895,509 highly mobile youth in the United States. This group included 1,205,259 homeless youth enrolled in public schools, 391,098 youth in foster care, 274,258 youth served by migrant education programs, and 24,894 youth residing in juvenile detention, correctional, and/or residential facilities. For data sources, see U.S. Department of Education, 2023a, 2023b; Children’s Bureau, 2022; Puzzanchera et al., 2023.

communities may face heightened barriers. Changes to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) protections and revised Title IX regulations affecting student rights may exacerbate existing disparities in education, housing stability, and access to essential social services. As a result, youth who are already at risk—such as those experiencing homelessness, navigating the juvenile justice system, or facing discrimination—are likely to encounter even greater obstacles to stability, academic success, and overall well-being. Further, highly mobile students, still grappling with the lingering educational, health, and social effects of the pandemic, now face heightened obstacles in an increasingly strained policy environment.

As one superintendent recently explained, students and the agencies that serve them are again “caught in the crosshairs of a societal war.” These conditions reflect broader efforts to erode our democracy and fuel political and economic instability (Rogers et al., 2024). Today’s fractured political landscape does not diminish the critical need for deliberate and sustained investments in young people who are too often

overlooked within our systems (Cazares-Minero et al., 2025). Rather, it underscores the importance of building more coherent, collaborative systems that work effectively to serve HMY. When multiple agencies provide overlapping services, resources can be wasted, and the effectiveness of efforts to support children—especially vulnerable populations like HMY—is compromised (Colvin et al., 2021). Streamlined, coordinated approaches simplify access and enable children and families to focus on receiving the benefits they need, rather than navigating unnecessary logistical barriers.

Lawmakers at all levels of government must take decisive action to address policy gaps and strengthen existing strategies, recognizing that the cost of inaction represents a missed opportunity to effectively invest public resources in future generations of young people who might otherwise be left behind. This paper concludes with actionable recommendations for policymakers, offering pathways to build a future where no child is overlooked, and the promise of opportunity is fulfilled for HMY.



Drivers of Student Mobility and the Benefits of Stability

The literature identifies multiple interconnected root causes of student mobility, including housing instability (Broton, 2021), family economic challenges (Brown & James, 2020), involvement in the foster care (Kothari et al., 2021) or juvenile legal systems, and factors such as immigration and gentrification. Addressing the root causes of student mobility through a coordinated system of supports—such as stable housing solutions, family support programs, and educational policies that prioritize continuity—can help reduce the negative effects of frequent school moves.

Establishing stable conditions for HMY is critical to improving their academic, emotional, and social outcomes (Cairns et al., 2022). Stability fosters continuity in care, education, and relationships—key protective factors that help youth thrive despite the challenges they face. By providing stable environments and consistent support, we can significantly improve their chances for success and reduce the long-term social and economic costs associated with mobility.

Stability in living and learning environments promotes better self-regulation and behavioral control. Youth with stable homes and school environments are less likely to act out, more likely to develop positive coping mechanisms, and better equipped to manage stress. Stabilizing the living situations of HMY can significantly reduce their stress levels and improve their emotional well-being. Providing consistent access to mental health services, like trauma-informed care and counseling, is crucial in helping them build resilience and cope with their past experiences. Predictability and routine are essential for fostering a sense of safety and control, which is especially important for youth who have experienced trauma.

Additionally, stabilizing the living and school environments of HMY can help them form and sustain relationships with caring adults and peers, which is critical for social and emotional development.

Research highlights that consistent, supportive relationships with adults—such as teachers, mentors, or foster parents—serve as critical protective factors for at-risk youth (Magson et al., 2021).

Long-term benefits of educational stability extend beyond academic success. Stable schooling improves employment prospects, earnings, housing security, social capital, and crime prevention outcomes for HMY. Providing students with a consistent, safe environment to meet their basic needs—alongside a stable, supportive learning space—ensures continuity of services in employment, healthcare, mental health, and legal advocacy. Access to caring adults and opportunities to develop lasting and meaningful relationships is essential for all young people. This is also true for young people who have experienced foster care, housing insecurity, the juvenile legal system, and migrant youth and families.

Highly Mobile Youth: A Call to Action for Policymakers

Lawmakers have acknowledged the urgent need for targeted policy responses to support a segment of the HMY population for decades. While various federal (see Table 2) and state-level (see Table 3) strategies have been enacted to address the needs of housing-insecure, foster, migrant, and justice-involved youth, these efforts fall short in three key areas: they fail to meet growing demand (Bishop et al., 2020), remain significantly underfunded (McTavish et al., 2022), and lack the necessary coordination to provide the responsive services youth deserve.

Newly elected officials at the local, state, and federal levels—including the current presidential administration—must take collective responsibility for the education, health, and well-being of HMY. The consequences of limited policy action are profound, carrying both moral and economic implications. Failure to address these needs perpetuates the school-to-prison pipeline, with the United States spending \$25 million per day incarcerating school-aged students (Justice Policy Institute, 2020). Many young people involved in the juvenile legal system

have experienced housing insecurity, involvement in the child welfare system, or social instability (James & Bishop, 2022). Further, the absence of these youth from the school environment has a short-term impact of reducing funding to many school systems and a long-term impact on limiting their opportunities to successfully transition to post-secondary education or gainful employment.

Transforming this dynamic requires a fundamental shift in policy priorities—from the staggering lifetime costs of lost earnings due to imprisonment, which exceed \$55 billion annually (Craigie et al., 2022), to fostering growth, health, and thriving youth. Building effective systems to serve young people not only promotes better health outcomes but also paves the way for economic stability. Policies must be grounded in systems of care, compassion, and love, ensuring that HMY are supported by robust, equitable, and sustainable measures.

Scholars like Chetty et al. (2024) argue that reversing opportunity disparities for HMY and historically marginalized communities requires three key strategies:

1. Investing not only in the current generation of working adults, but also in the next generation of children and in declining communities.
2. Prioritizing policies that reshape social community structures (e.g., reducing segregation), as social communities shape children's opportunities based on race, class, and neighborhood environments.
3. Strengthening social capital between communities (e.g., by modifying zoning restrictions, revising school district boundaries, and increasing access to affordable housing in high-opportunity areas).

Recent research shows that housing vouchers, job training for higher education, and interventions that combine financial or human capital with social support and connections (e.g., assistance in housing searches, connections to employers, or support from college counselors) have the greatest impacts on economic opportunity and can significantly narrow racial and socioeconomic disparities (Weiss et al., 2019; Katz et al., 2022; Bergman et al., 2024).



Lawmakers and public systems must rethink their role in creating policy conditions that equitably serve students experiencing homelessness, youth in foster care, migrant youth, and justice-involved young people—not just individually, but also across populations through intersectional, integrated approaches. For example, housing providers and school systems can work together to support health clinics for young people. Schools and state agencies can support literacy and job training for migrant youth. Additionally, lawmakers can adopt policies that prioritize financial stability, mental health, and family support to keep families together and children out of the child welfare system (Espino et al., 2024).

Most public systems are not designed to address the intersectionality of young people's lived experiences—such as being unhoused, moving with their families as agricultural jobs change seasonally, or interacting with the juvenile legal system and child welfare agencies. Rather, agencies and providers typically build their strategies on existing policies, requirements, systems, and efforts—layered on top of one another like a tiered cake (McTavish et al., 2022).

This paper is organized into three sections: (1) a persuasive case for more coherent policies and systems to serve young people, (2) a review of existing policies that center on students experiencing homelessness, the foster care system, migrant youth, and justice-involved young people, and (3) policy recommendations for equitable system-wide care for HMY.

POLICIES TO ENCOURAGE COHERENT SYSTEMS THAT WORK ACROSS CHILD & YOUTH POPULATIONS

The totality of challenges today in effectively serving children and families is daunting—there is no disputing this fact. For decades, state and local child-serving systems, along with their dedicated staff, have worked tirelessly to care for complex, interconnected human beings within functionally and structurally siloed systems, which often fall short of achieving the timely and targeted care that our children and families need.² Now is the time for policymakers to take practical steps that incentivize and support staff across multiple sectors in designing, building, and implementing practices that seamlessly serve children and families when and how they need support.

This is especially true for HMY—a segment of the American child population that is among the most vulnerable to developmental harm in the face of volatile, unstable and competing sectors responsible for their care. This population in particular highlights the shortcomings of the current system design, in which they require support across multiple domains of health and development—including housing, food, and education. Yet, the public systems they rely on often work at cross-purposes, competing over jurisdiction and resources. This frequent reality demonstrates the need for greater coherence within and across these systems—beginning with strategic, intentional responses that apply the necessary attention to systemic reforms.

Notably, within these currently segregated sectors, there are existing bodies of work and examples of integrated attempts. However, these efforts—which operate under various names, including system of care, collective impact, interconnected systems framework (ISF), and multi-tiered systems of support—remain siloed. These structural divisions make it difficult to fully realize the effectiveness of each system in serving young people, or to align efforts across service sectors. This is where policy plays a crucial role in fostering collaboration between agencies and individuals.

Repeated Patterns of Policymaking May Contain the Solutions

The repeated pattern of policy responses to the needs of a subpopulation of HMY—children and youth more broadly— is almost exclusively limited to in-sector responses. That is, the proposed law changes and the associated funding are contained within one sector. This, by definition, limits the ability of the benefiting sector by the law to collaborate with other sectors on the implementation of the new policy. A review of these efforts over the past decade reveals several key features:

1. The central focus is on in-sector decisions, with secondary attention to cross-sector approaches: Guided by laws prescribed for the sector (e.g. education code applies only to education, health code prescribes action just for behavioral health agencies, etc.), technical assistance naturally focuses its attention nearly or exclusively on the actors in that sector. This is necessary but not sufficient to achieve systems that are able to reflect and respond to the complex needs of HMY in a timely manner. This leads to in-sector or tandem sector collaboration opportunities. For example, when programs need to be coordinated for English learners and students

2 "Birth To Kindergarten: The Importance of the Early Years" CRB California Research Bureau, California State Library, February 1998. <https://docplayer.net/7617824-Crbcalifornia-research-bureau-california-state-library.html>
Hodges, Sharon, et al. "Strategies for System of Care Development: Making Change in Complex Systems." Research and Training Center Study 2, June 2006, p. 15.

with IEPs in schools and across classrooms. However, this approach often disregards other vital necessities for students to be present and able to take advantage of learning opportunities in school settings.

2. Most efforts encourage youth, family, and community engagement: A significant shift from just a few decades ago, many state reform efforts now include a focus on centering the engagement of local youth, families, and communities. Yet, if these efforts remain siloed in their local implementation, our attempts to co-design solutions with those we intend to serve may instead fracture and burden the very people we seek to support. For example, a local community may implement several state laws related to education, behavioral health, and juvenile justice, each requiring community engagement. If staff members in these sectors are unaware of one another's efforts, the community may experience three separate agencies requesting feedback on similar issues. This redundancy places an unnecessary burden on stakeholders, requiring them to engage with agencies three times rather than streamlining the process.

3. Language varies, but the meaning remains fundamentally the same: A review of these parallel efforts reveals that different sectors use distinct terminology, but their intentions and values remain aligned toward similar, interconnected outcomes. However, there is a lack of technical assistance to bridge these differences, which could help develop shared language and implementation strategies across sectors and community efforts. For example, both the education and health fields use frameworks in which to categorize the needs of children and youth, often structured into three tiers. These tiers represent an escalation of services, typically depicted as a triangle. While the overall framework is strikingly similar across fields, the terminology used to describe similar service delivery varies significantly.

In sum, these emerging implementation approaches are important and can build in-sector capacity. However, this will likely lead to unintended consequences. There are so many opportunities for local communities and systems to draw state and federal resources that many local leaders' experience is more akin to regulatory chaos. This illustrates how the state's disjointed administration of these resources overwhelms local systems, leaving little time for effective planning and sustainable implementation. Without intervention, this may lead to the atomization of integration efforts, keeping them confined within individual sectors rather than fostering cross-sector collaboration. While these policy approaches are well-intentioned, they ultimately fail to flip the opportunity equation advocated by Chetty et al., 2024.

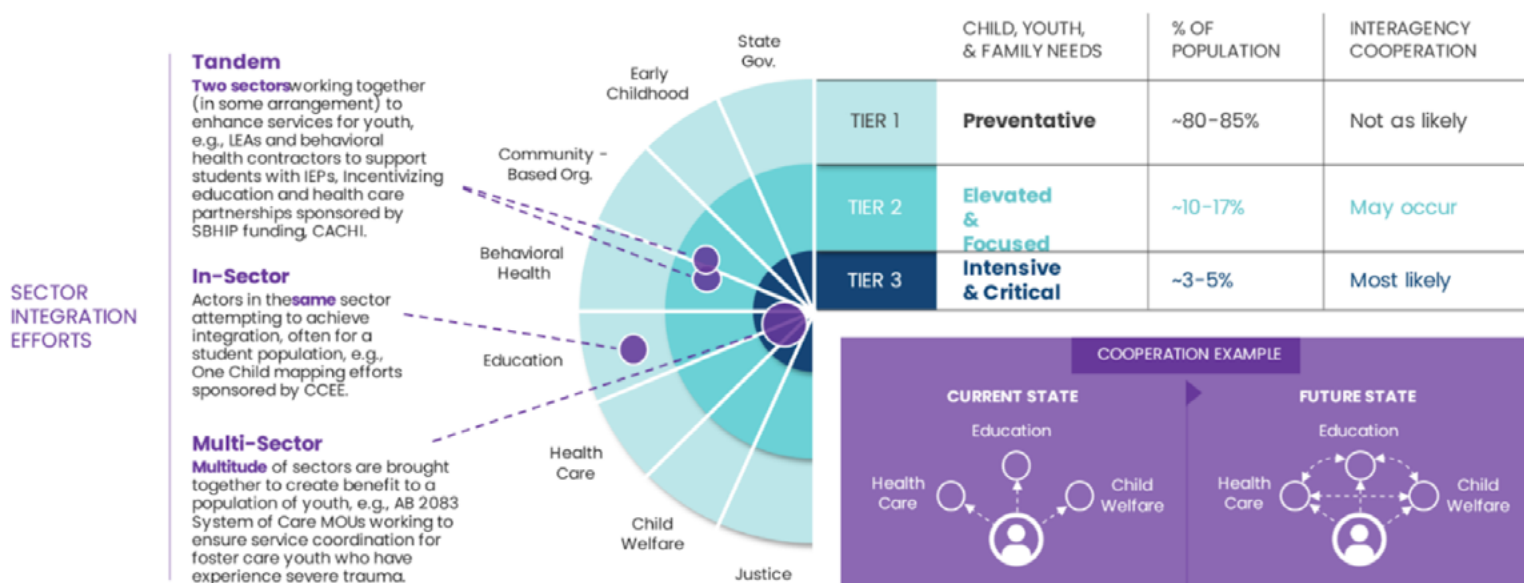
Further, when we map these efforts visually, we can observe isolated examples of coordination; however, this is insufficient to achieve the outcomes the state desires through existing allocations. We need *integration across all* elements—sector, acuity, and level (see Figure 1)—to create more effective care systems for children and youth. No single agency or system should bear full responsibility for the coordination and management of services for children and youth.



3 Lynn et al., (2018). When Collective Impact Has Impact: A Cross-Site Study of 25 Collective Impact Initiatives." ORS Impact. Retrieved at https://orsimpact.com/DirectoryAttachments/10262018_111513_477_CI_Study_Report_10-26-2018.pdf

4 Powell, R. (2018). The price we pay. Breaking Barriers California. Retrieved at <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/554a3e82e4b0fe31e575f48b/t/5be5ce0c1ae6cf84de74255c/1541787148536/The+Price+We+Pay.pdf>

Figure 1. Defining Integration Scope and Scale: Layering Service Delivery Across Sectors to Meet Youth Needs



Research indicates that holistically unified systems that are intentionally designed to foster meaningful coalition building, comprehensive support, shared practice, and accountability are successful beyond those that operate under siloed collaboration models.³ Furthermore, when meaningful cross-sector collaboration is optimized, the return on the publicly invested dollar is significant (Clarke & Crane, 2018). Our current systems, despite historic, incremental improvements, still largely represent the former siloed, disjointed, and targeted efforts.⁴

A coherent system must weave together partners, initiatives, and investments to support HMY; provide comprehensive services and supports that are mutually reinforcing; coordinate funding; and hold public agencies collectively responsible for progress and improved outcomes. It is through intentional and dedicated efforts to shift the culture of local governmental and nongovernmental organizations that we will succeed. We must build a reality in which we create common—not competing—objectives; share—not hoard—funding; build up—not replace—the capacity of trained professionals; and incentivize—not penalize—collaborative efforts.

Many of the successful integration efforts that pave the way for a redefined, coherent system take time—often years or even decades, with each beginning from a unique starting point. But what remains constant is the child-, youth- and family-centered focus that invites a collective of professionals and systems to join with children, youth, and families in shared leadership, care, and support for one another. Skeptics may argue that there is already funding dedicated to pursuing integration and that current policy frameworks have already defined the solution. However, it is this illusion that lulls us into complacency. What is needed is for policymakers to step beyond the constraints of outdated policy architecture put in place by previous generations without the benefit of what we know today—progress in HMY outcomes must adhere to the unifying principles of coherence.

THE CURRENT POLICY LANDSCAPE

The current landscape of policies aimed at improving the education, health, and well-being of HMY represents a patchwork of ideas and strategies that primarily focuses on individual populations rather than shared approaches across HMY populations. Notably, the analysis of these current laws was not conducted at a single point in time but rather reflects the historical policy accretion of Congress over decades.

The current landscape of policies aimed at improving the education, health, and well-being of HMY represents a patchwork of ideas and strategies that primarily focuses on individual populations rather than shared approaches across HMY populations. Notably, the analysis of these current laws was not conducted at a single point in time but rather reflects the historical policy accretion of Congress over decades. Table 1 and Table 2 in Appendix A provide a summary of existing federal and state laws that apply to HMY populations. An analysis of the existing policy landscape surfaces the following common characteristics at both the federal and state levels:

1. Individual populations are emphasized over supporting the multiple needs of a child or youth in most federal and state HMY policies.

A child or youth may benefit from policies centered on serving students experiencing homelessness, involvement in the foster system, or the juvenile justice system. These policies call out strategies such as early identification systems, comprehensive case management models, or financial support. Few policies explicitly address the overlap in needs between HMY populations resulting in an approach that tends to address the immediate need of the child or youth without considering their broader, interconnected needs. The sole exception to this fact is Colorado's Education Stability Grant (ESG) program (18-1306) which is the only state legislation in the country aimed at supporting homeless, foster, and migrant youth together. The ESG program aims

to address reducing educational barriers for highly mobile students by providing academic and social-emotional services and support.⁵ Collaboration and coordination with other state and local agencies that serve highly mobile children and youth is required in the policy (e.g., county child welfare agencies) and is facilitated through learning sessions and teams from communities coming together to learn collectively.

2. Emergent, rather than preventative or targeted policy approaches for HMY are more common at the federal and state level.

As a whole, policies for HMY tend to be reactive, addressing existing systems or social patterns, rather than adopting upstream or preventative approaches to prevent young people and families from experiencing housing insecurity, child welfare, the justice system, or migration due to economic instability. This helps explain the fragmented nature of most of the policy landscape for HMY. That is, most policies are designed to address a perceived challenge at the time of the law's passage for those child and youth populations rather than proactively addressing ongoing economic, social, and educational challenges. This policy design leads to what many officials describe as 'policy layering,' where frequent conflicts arise between federal and state policies targeting the same population. Additionally, universal policy approaches like Title I—which are intended to direct resources to serve young people impacted by the adverse conditions of poverty—often fail to reach highly mobile populations (Popp et al., 2003).

⁵ Education Stability Grant Pursuant to: Colorado House Bill 18-1306; Colorado Revised Statute § 22-32-138.



Of course, there are exceptions to this trend at both the federal and state level where policies promote prevention. A few examples include: 1) The Federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) which aims to keep families together and to prevent children from entering the foster system, allowing state flexibility to use federal funds for mental health services and substance use treatment; 2) The Federal Youth PROMISE (Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education) Act, intended to prevent youth delinquency and gang involvement through community-based intervention programs and services; 3) The Every Student Succeeds Act includes provisions for providing education services to housing insecure, foster, migrant and justice-involved communities. At the state level, Connecticut has invested in a suite of strategies as part of a state Youth Homelessness Prevention Plan to keep youth and families in stable housing through early screening systems, mediation services, emergency assistance, and financial support to families.

3. Federal laws aim to address either population-based or individual need-based issues, not both.

Federal laws can be categorized into two broad domains:

First, population-based laws are designed to address the universal needs of Americans. An example of this is the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a 2010 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1964. Another example is the Affordable Care Act (ACA), a 2009 amendment to the

Public Health Service Act of 1944. These laws focus on a single sector—such as education or health—to distribute funding along with regulations that aim to advance broad-based, productive outcomes for Americans. Second, individual need-based laws target specific subpopulations of the U.S. that require support distinct from the general American population. An example of this is the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act which provides explicit educational support for homeless youth. While these categories remain largely disconnected, federal policy could adopt a targeted universalism approach, setting broad goals for all children and youth while tailoring interventions to support populations with additional needs.⁶

4. Siloed approaches in education policy affecting multiple populations are not unique, but they can be changed.

Often, there is no shared, overarching goal that enables various stakeholders to understand their roles and relationships within the policy environment. This stems from the fact that most policies have been developed and implemented in isolation, reflecting a vertical, fragmented approach. As one study explains, “governments have trouble solving big complex problems in large part because governments have been organized into collections of narrowly focused vertical silos” (Urban, 2018).

However, this fragmented approach can be transformed. Policy design and implementation can be reimaged to promote shared goals and metrics,

⁶ powell, j. a., et al. 2019. Targeted Universalism: Policy & Practice. Othering and Belonging Institute. University of California, Berkeley.

encouraging agencies to align their efforts and foster cross-disciplinary decision-making structures. This can be achieved through the establishment of interagency councils or regularly scheduled cross-team meetings, coupled with unified data systems that allow agencies to securely share information and reduce duplication of effort.

Additionally, pooled budgets can break down funding silos, enabling resources to flow toward integrated, preventative solutions—such as community schools that provide housing and mental health services alongside education (Covelli et al., 2022). Policy development processes should also actively involve stakeholders and community organizations, ensuring a holistic approach to addressing interconnected issues. For example, tackling chronic absenteeism could involve collaboration between transportation, housing, and health agencies to address its root causes.

By fostering collaboration, aligning resources, and engaging diverse stakeholders, policies can shift from isolated, vertical frameworks to interconnected, horizontal strategies capable of addressing complex societal challenges effectively.

5. Most state laws extend federal requirements, but some states lead with creative, context-specific solutions.

State policies for HMY often extend or supplement federal laws (Table 3) by adapting them to local contexts, providing additional resources, and ensuring that federal protections are fully implemented. While the federal government sets minimum standards for protections, states have the flexibility to expand and enhance these supports, ensuring that HMY receive consistent access to stable education, housing, and health services.

Table 2. Examples of State Extensions to Federal Laws

State	Federal Law	(Extension) State Laws
CA	McKinney-Vento and ESSA	• California Homeless Youth Project provides ongoing housing, education, and health services to homeless youth. • LCFF funding supports foster youth and requires reporting for housing insecure youth.
NY	Fostering Connections Act and Second Chance Act	• The Educational Stability for Foster Care Youth Act provides additional support for transportation and school enrollment. • The Close to Home Initiative moves youth offenders out of state-run detention centers and into local facilities closer to their families. This initiative includes comprehensive reentry services, such as educational programs, vocational training, and mental health counseling.
TX	Migrant Education Program and ESSA & Fostering Connections	• Builds on federal funding with additional state resources. • The Foster Care and Student Success Program aligns with the ESSA and Fostering Connections mandates, providing additional training for educators and foster care caseworkers to support the academic success of foster youth.
GA	Second Chance Act	• The Reentry Partnership Housing Program provides housing and case management services to justice-involved youth as they transition back into their communities. The state also offers reentry support focused on family reunification and vocational training.
CO	Family First Preventions Services Act (FFPSA)	• State-run programs focus on keeping youth in their homes and out of detention facilities through intensive family-based services, trauma-informed care, and mental health treatment.
OH	Family First Preventions Services Act (FFPSA)	• The Ohio Family First Prevention Plan offers expanded mental health and substance abuse treatment services to justice-involved youth, with a focus on family preservation and avoiding out-of-home placements.
MI	Second Chance Act	• Supplements federal funding through the Juvenile Justice Reentry Initiative with state resources to provide youth with individualized reentry plans, including mental health services, substance abuse counseling, and job readiness programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this analysis across existing federal and state policies for HMY, as well as the most recent policy platforms both within and outside of government, reveal a lack of policy coherence (Honig & Hatch, 2004). In other words, multiple, competing demands make it difficult for schools and systems that serve young people furthest from opportunity, to focus on their health and well-being.

Further, this policy incoherence directly affects the ground level as reflected in the needs of crossover youth.⁷ In sum, the following recommendations aim to advance more coherent and integrated systems of care for HMY. The structure of these recommendations is shaped around two categories: “big ideas”—longer horizon policy shaping to transform this policy domain, and “short-run advances”—which are short-term responses to existing, critical system challenges working to support HMY.

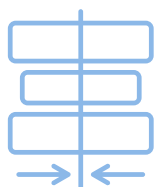
Regardless of the time frame for the recommendations below, the analysis suggests that certain foundational actions should be taken to enable the more coherent and integrated implementation of both existing and future federal and state policies. These include:



BIG IDEAS

01

Aligning target populations, service periods, eligibility, and renewal processes for federal programs serving HMY and, where possible, establishing intersectional or presumptive eligibility across programs.



Throughout the federal provisions documented in this brief, there are varying ages of children and youth to be served, periods of service, and eligibility requirements. In numerous instances these provisions are highly complementary, if not duplicative, of one another. The downstream impact of this is that staff in local agencies and furthermore those parents and/or guardians seeking these benefits for the children in their care have to repeatedly provide the same information to different agencies to access benefits, often with significant delays in access. A recent example of how cross-federal agency coordination can help streamline these provisions is the April 2022 policy change⁸ by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which expanded the definition of ‘public assistance’ to include families and individuals receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)/food assistance benefits, thereby making them categorically eligible for Head Start services.

⁷ Herz, D. C., Ryan, J. P., & Bilchik, S. (2017). Addressing the needs of crossover youth: What key professionals are saying. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 77, 164–170. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilcyouth.2017.02.016>

⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2022). Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility for Head Start services (ACF-IM-HS-22-03). Administration for Children and Families. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/im/acf-im-hs-22-03>

02 Increasing funding to complement existing efforts that promote prevention and streamlined approaches to serving HMY.



It has been well documented that HMY centered policies are often underfunded (Bishop et al., 2020; Saxena et al., 2020) even as numbers have grown for specific populations, especially students experiencing homelessness and migrant youth. While there is a growing demand for more public funding to support HMY, the authors of this paper argue that lawmakers must prioritize approaches that prevent young people from entering these systems altogether and expand broader efforts to stabilize their living circumstances. Examples of these investments include the social programs described by Chetty et al. (2024), such as housing vouchers, job training for higher education, and interventions that integrate financial or human capital with social support and connections (e.g., assistance in housing search, connections to employers, or support from college counselors). As research suggests, these social investments have the greatest impact on economic opportunity and significantly narrow racial and socioeconomic disparities (Weiss et al., 2019; Katz et al., 2022; Bergman et al., 2024). Additionally, streamlined approaches to serving HMY, such as Colorado’s Education Stability Grant (ESG), which provides integrated services across multiple populations, and the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which removes health coverage barriers for vulnerable groups, are critical policy pursuits that ensure essential protections and services remain accessible to HMY.

03 Integrating comprehensive whole child data systems.



The agencies referenced in this report, which oversee and administer this patchwork of federal laws supporting HMY, should have access—within the constraints of current privacy laws—to data from other agencies to improve regulatory guidance and fund distribution. To facilitate this, the authors of this brief propose a pilot program aligning two or more agencies to test data sharing capabilities in ways that would directly enhance guidance and fund distribution. Specifically, the authors suggest that one of these pilot tests focus on how agencies can coordinate the administration of their respective programs impacting HMY. For example, school-based health and mental health services could be improved by updating the December 2019 guidance from HHS and ED regarding the intersection of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Providing greater clarity on how schools and districts can share information, coordinate care, and ensure accurate billing within legal constraints would help optimize service delivery.

04 Providing meaningful opportunities for youth and young adults to offer insight, identify barriers, and co-design solutions to be incorporated into specific policies and actions.



While the practice of directly engaging children and youth in system design decisions at the local level has gained traction in recent years, there has been little evidence of meaningful and substantial progress at the federal level. The authors recommend creating and expanding opportunities for youth to provide perspective on the federal guidance and fund distribution, recognizing their on the ground insight as a critical component of effective program administration and policy feedback.



SHORT-RUN ADVANCES

05 Establishing cross-system standing committees of child-serving federal agencies.



These committees will include representatives from federal agencies including, but not limited to, the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Justice, and Social Services. They should be guided by leadership from the White House’s Domestic Policy Council, Office of Management and Budget serving as a direct extension of the policy agenda developed in that council. This structure will enable agencies to prioritize interagency coordination as a fundamental practice. Additionally, they should also meaningfully establish and maintain formal channels through which HMY can provide feedback to federal agencies, particularly regarding legislation and the executive administration of federal programs and funding. This body would also actively seek opportunities to coordinate overlapping and complementary programs out to states and local agencies that incentivize collaboration. For example, two or more agencies could coordinate entitlement or grant programs that incentivize local organizations to braid resources, maximizing benefits for HMY within their communities.

06 Reissuing—and potentially strengthening—Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) guidance⁹ to require training for serving unaccompanied homeless youth.



This revision should include a requirement that at least one staff member in every local SNAP office be designated as the “Unaccompanied Youth Liaison,” trained in youth homelessness. Additionally, it should clarify that referring unaccompanied youth to child protective services cannot be a prerequisite to providing them with SNAP benefits.

Policy recommendations will vary at the federal, state, and local levels, primarily because the scope and scale of policy application is broadest at the federal level and becomes increasingly specific to implementation and community needs at the local level. This suggests that the recommendations in this brief should focus on policy architecture that **enables and incentivizes** state and local communities to move toward greater system coherence. Key elements include implementation guides, technical assistance, and data integration for action at the local level. Additionally, policies should bolster capacity and infrastructure within and across systems to support both prevention efforts and interventions that promote stability and access when mobility is unavoidable—such as academic acceleration, transportation, and career pathways.



⁹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (n.d.). Clarification of SNAP policies: Barriers facing homeless youth. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/snap-clarification-policies-barriers-facing-homeless-youth>

CONCLUSION

The challenges faced by HMY in the U.S. demand urgent and comprehensive policy responses that move beyond reactive measures that currently dominate the policy landscape.

The distinct vulnerabilities of HMY—whether they are experiencing homelessness, foster care, migration, or involvement in the juvenile justice system—necessitate coordinated, intersectional approaches that address both structural inequities and systemic underfunding.

Current policies highlighted in this paper (see Tables 1–4), while a step in the right direction, remain insufficient in both scope and sustainability. To

truly support HMY, lawmakers at the federal, state, and local levels must invest in long-term solutions or “Big Fixes” that prioritize equitable education, housing stability, and social mobility. By rethinking and restructuring the systems that serve HMY, we can shift from fragmented, crisis-driven responses to a model of integrated care, ensuring that young people not only survive but thrive in an environment of opportunity and support.



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APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF CURRENT HMY FEDERAL POLICIES

Appendix A summarizes several federal policies adopted in recent decades intended to provide targeted assistance and services to HMY. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) are among the key policy mechanisms that intersect across multiple HMY populations. IDEA applies to students with disabilities, while ESSA serves a broader purpose by supporting children and families from low-income backgrounds as part of federal anti-poverty efforts. (See the “Multiple Populations” column for more details.) Although ESSA is an updated version of the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)—the first federal anti-poverty education law that established Title I— it could serve as a pathway for further prioritizing the needs of HMY.

Table 3. Summary of Federal Policies and the Populations Named in Legislation (Further Descriptions Below)

Focus Population	Multiple Populations	Students Experiencing Homelessness	Students Experiencing the Foster System	Migrant Youth	Justice-Involved Youth
Federal Policy Name	- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) - Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) - Public Health Service Act - Social Security Act (SSA) - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) - Child Tax Credit (CTC) - Affordable Care Act (ACA)	- McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act - Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) - Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) - Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act - Housing and Urban Development Continuum of Care (CoC) Program	- Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) - Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act - Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) - Chafee Foster Care Independence Program - Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program - Indian Child Welfare Act - Supporting Normalcy and Empowering Foster Youth Act	- Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) - Plyler v. Doe¹⁰ - Migrant Education Program - Unaccompanied Children (UC) Program - Refugee Resettlement Program - Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act	- Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) - Second Chance Act - Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO) Program - Fair Sentencing Act - Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)

¹⁰ Plyler v. Doe is a U.S. Supreme Court case that ruled that states cannot deny undocumented children access to free public education.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures that children and youth with disabilities, from birth through age 21, receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and related services in the least restrictive environment (LRE) (U.S. Department of Education, 2023)

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides federal funding and accountability measures to ensure all students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds, students with disabilities, English learners, and students of color, receive equitable educational opportunities (U.S. Department of Education, 2015)

The Public Health Service Act (PHSA) grants the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) broad authority to address public health emergencies, regulate pharmaceuticals, fund medical research, and improve access to healthcare services through agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) (HHS, 2022)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides food-purchasing assistance to low-income individuals and families, including working families, older adults, and people with disabilities. As of 2023, approximately 62% of SNAP participants were in households with children, while 37% were in households with older adults or individuals with disabilities (U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA], 2023).

The Child Tax Credit (CTC) is a federal tax benefit that reduces income tax liability for families with dependent children. The credit is refundable for eligible families, meaning it can provide direct financial assistance even if no income tax is owed. Research suggests the CTC is one of the most effective anti-poverty measures in the U.S. (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2023)

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) mandates that all health insurance plans include age-appropriate pediatric benefits, including Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) services, as well as vision, hearing, and dental care (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2023).

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act guarantees educational access, stability, and support services for PreK-12 children and youth experiencing homelessness, including immediate school enrollment, transportation assistance, and access to resources regardless of residency documentation (U.S. Department of Education, 2023).

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) funds community-based programs to provide emergency shelter, transitional housing, crisis intervention, counseling, and aftercare services for runaway and homeless youth (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2023).

The Youth Homeless Demo Program (YHDP) aims to serve youth experiencing homelessness, with a focus on unaccompanied youth and pregnant or parenting youth, under age 24 (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD], 2023).

The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act aims to improve the lives of children in foster care by promoting permanent placements with relatives through guardianship or adoption, enhancing access to healthcare and education, and improving support for older foster youth transitioning into adulthood. The law prioritizes keeping siblings together and connecting children with family members when possible (Children's Bureau, 2023).

The Continuum of Care Program provides federal funding to communities for homelessness prevention, including services for survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. It also supports efforts to quickly rehouse homeless individuals and families while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused by homelessness (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD], 2023).

The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) aims to serve children in foster care, those eligible for adoption assistance, and kinship guardianship. It also includes provisions for tribal child welfare agencies to directly access federal funds (Children's Bureau, 2023).

The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) shifts federal child welfare funding toward prevention by supporting families at risk of entering the child welfare system, [providing services for children who are candidates for foster care, and offering resources for pregnant or parenting foster youth (Children's Bureau, 2023).

The Chafee Foster Care Independence Program provides financial assistance, education, and employment support for youth transitioning out of foster care. It serves those aged 14 and older, including youth who left foster care through adoption or guardianship at age 16 or older, with eligibility extending up to age 21 (or 23 in some states) (Children's Bureau, 2023).

The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program provides financial assistance for postsecondary education and vocational training to youth who have aged out of foster care, been adopted after age 16, or entered kinship guardianship placements (Children's Bureau, 2023).

The Indian Child Welfare Act protects the rights of American Indian and Alaska Native children and their families by prioritizing tribal jurisdiction in child welfare cases and supporting cultural and familial connections (National Indian Child Welfare Association, 2023).

The Supporting Normalcy for Foster Youth Act ensures that children and youth in foster care have access to age-appropriate activities, peer engagement, and developmentally appropriate experiences to support their transition into adulthood (Children's Bureau, 2023).

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) immigration policy provides temporary relief from deportation and work authorization for undocumented individuals who were brought to the U.S. as children. While DACA does not provide a pathway to citizenship, recipients can renew their status every two years (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services [USCIS], 2023).

The Migrant Education Program (MEP) provides supplemental educational services to migratory children and youth, including those in agricultural and fishing industries, to ensure they meet academic standards and graduate with a high school diploma (U.S. Department of Education, 2023).

The Unaccompanied Children (UC) Program provides temporary shelter, legal assistance, and care for unaccompanied children who enter the U.S. without a parent or legal guardian, or who have been separated from their parent or legal guardian (Office of Refugee Resettlement [ORR], 2023).

The Refugee Resettlement Program provides housing, employment, and social services to refugees, asylees, Cuban and Haitian entrants, Amerasians, Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrants, and victims of human trafficking. The program aims to help these individuals achieve economic self-sufficiency and integrate into American society (Office of Refugee Resettlement [ORR], 2023).

The Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act (MSPA) protects migrant and seasonal agricultural workers by establishing employment standards related to wages, housing, transportation, and record-keeping (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023).

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) establishes federal standards for juvenile justice systems, focusing on rehabilitation, community-based alternatives to incarceration, and protections against the placement of youth in adult facilities (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention [OJJDP], 2023).

The Second Chance Act funds programs that support adults and juveniles transitioning from incarceration by providing employment assistance, housing, substance abuse treatment, and other reentry services to reduce recidivism (U.S. Department of Justice, 2023).

The Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO) program, administered by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), provides job training, career counseling, and employment support to justice-involved youth and adults reentering the workforce after incarceration (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023).

The Fair Sentencing Act of 2010 reduced the disparity in sentencing between crack and powder cocaine offenses, which had disproportionately impacted Black communities (U.S. Sentencing Commission, 2023).

The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) reforms federal child welfare funding to focus on preventing family separation and reducing reliance on foster care placements, especially in institutional settings (Children's Bureau, 2023).

Table 4. Acronyms of Federal Agencies with Oversight to Cited Federal Policies in Table 6

Acronym	Federal Agency Full Name
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
DOI	U.S. Department of the Interior
CNCS	Corporation for National and Community Service (AmeriCorps)
ICH	U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness
DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
RAP	Refugee Admissions Program
ORR	Office of Refugee Resettlement
USCIS	U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
ICE	U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
ED	U.S. Department of Education
OME	Office of Migrant Education, ED
OSSE	Office of Elementary & Secondary Education
OSEP	Office of Special Education Program
GSA	General Services Administration
DOL	U.S. Department of Labor
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service
DOJ	U.S. Department of Justice
OJP	Office of Justice Programs
BOP	Federal Bureau of Prisons
ONDCP	Office of National Drug Control Policy
OJJDP	Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
HHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
AYCF	Administration on Children, Youth and Families
ACF	Administration for Children and Families
FYSB	Family and Youth Services Bureau

Table 5. Population(s) Served by Federal Policies Serving HMY, Responsible Agencies, Authorized Spending, and Funding Length

Federal Law	Responsible Federal Agency(ies) / Department	Amount ¹²	Funding Length	Highly Mobile Youth Need Category ¹¹			
				Homeless	Foster	Justice	Migrant
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	ED (OSEP)	\$15.5B ¹³	Ongoing	●	●	●	●
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)	OSSE, ED	\$24.9B ¹⁴	Ongoing	●	●	●	●
Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act	HHS, ACF	\$1.8B ¹⁵	FY09-18	●	●		
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	USDA, FNS	\$112B ¹⁶	Ongoing	●	●		●
Affordable Care Act (ACA) Provisions	HHS, CMS, HUD, ED, DOL	\$1.6T ¹⁷	Ongoing	●		●	
Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)	HHS, ACF, CB, DOJ	\$1.48B ¹⁸	FY18-27		●	●	
McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act	ED, HHS, HUD, GSA, ICH	\$125M ¹⁹	Ongoing	●			
Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP)	HUD	\$72M ²⁰	Ongoing	●			
Continuum of Care (CoC) Program	HUD	\$3.16B ²¹	Ongoing	●			
Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA)	HHS, FYSB, AYCF, ACF, ICH	\$140M ²²	Ongoing	●			
Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA)	HHS, ACF	\$4.5B ²³	Ongoing		●		
Chafee Foster Care Independence Program	ACF, HHS	\$143M ²⁴	Ongoing		●		
Supporting Normalcy and Empowering Foster Youth Act	ACF, HHS	n/a ²⁵	Ongoing		●		

¹¹ Abbreviations for children and youth populations: Homeless = students experiencing homelessness, Foster = foster youth, Justice = justice-involved youth, and Migrant = migrant youth.

¹² Letters after the dollar figures mean: T = trillions, B = billions, and M = millions

¹³ FY2019 — Congressional Research Service. (2019). Federal education funding trends: FY2019 summary. U.S. Government Publishing Office. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/r/r44624>

¹⁴ FY2023 — U.S. Department of Education. (2023). Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) funding overview. <https://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/laws-protecting-students-act-essa>

¹⁵ FY2025 — Congress.gov. (2025). H.R. 6893—Appropriations Bill for FY2025. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/house-bill/6893>

¹⁶ FY2023 — U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. (2023). Key statistics on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/key-statistics-and-research> And SNAP spending estimates and projections. <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/43173> and FY2023 — U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2023). SNAP data charts. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/charts-of-note/chart-detail?chartId=106756>

¹⁷ FY2023 — U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2023). Medicaid expansion and health care access for homeless youth: Policy update. <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fy2023-performance-plan.pdf>

¹⁸ FY2023 — Congressional Research Service. (2023). McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: Funding summary. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN10858>

¹⁹ FY2024 — National Center for Homeless Education. (2024). McKinney-Vento Act legislation and funding implementation guidance. <https://nche.ed.gov/legislation/mckinney-vento-and-fy2024> — U.S. Department of Education. (2024). Funding status and grant awards for Education for Homeless Children and Youths (EHCY).

²⁰ FY2024 — U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2024). Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) funding overview. https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/yhdp

²¹ FY2025 — U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2025). Continuum of Care (CoC) program funding allocations. <https://www.hud.gov/pro>

²² FY2023 — National Network for Youth. (2025). Federal funding freeze: What happened and what's ahead?. <https://nn4youth.org/2025/01/30/federal-funding-freeze-what-happened-and-whats-ahead/> and FY2023 — U.S. Code of Federal Regulations. (2025). Title 45—Public Welfare: Foster care programs (Funding provisions). <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/subtitle-B/chapter-XIII/subchapter-F/part-1351>

²³ FY2023 — Congress.gov. (2023). Public Law 105-89: Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997. <https://www.congress.gov/105/plaws/publ89/PLAW-105publ89.pdf>

²⁴ FY2024 — U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2024). John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) grant funding. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/grant-funding/john-h-chafee-foster-care-independence-program>

²⁵ The act provides ongoing funding through Title IV-B of the Social Security Act, supporting various child welfare services.

Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program	ACF, ED	n/a ²⁶	Ongoing		●		
Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)	DOI, BIA; HHS, ACF	\$13.5M ²⁷	Ongoing		●		
Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP)	DOJ, ED, HHS, HUD, DOI, DOL	\$223M ²⁸	Ongoing			●	
Second Chance Act	BJA, OJJDP, OJP	\$110M ²⁹	One-time?			●	
Youth PROMISE Act³⁰	DOJ, OJJDP	n/a ³¹	Ongoing			●	
Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO) Program	DOJ	\$115M ³²	Ongoing			●	
Fair Sentencing Act	DOJ, USSC	Savings ³³	n/a			●	
Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)	USCIS, DHS	Savings ³⁴	n/a				●
Migrant Education Program	ED	\$375M ³⁵	Ongoing				●
Unaccompanied Children (UC) Program	ORR, ACF, HHS, DHS	\$6B ³⁶	Ongoing				●
Refugee Resettlement Program	ORR, RAP, DHS	\$6B ³⁷	Ongoing				●

26 The federal government allocates up to \$5,000 per eligible student annually for the ETV program.

27 FY2023 — U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs. (2023). Indian Child Welfare Act Title II Grants—Funding and program overview. <https://www.pandemicoversight.gov/data-interactive-tools/programs/indian-child-welfare-act-title-ii-grants>

28 FY2025 — U.S. Department of the Treasury, USAspending.gov. (2025). Federal account spending: Program 015-0405 overview. https://www.usaspending.gov/federal_account/015-0405

29 FY2025 — Federal Bureau of Prisons. (2025). Recognizing the Second Chance Act: Rehabilitation and reentry programs for incarcerated individuals. <https://www.bop.gov/resources/news/20240410-recognizing-the-second-chance-act.jsp>

30 PROMISE stands for Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education.

31 FY2023 — Congress.gov. (2023). House Report 111-688: Justice reform and reentry initiatives. <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-report/111th-congress/house-report/688/1>

32 FY2024 — U.S. Department of Labor. (2024). Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO) program fact sheet. https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/reentry/pdf/REO-Fact-Sheet-April_2024.pdf

33 Government Spending: The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated that implementing the Fair Sentencing Act would reduce federal prison system expenditures by \$42 million over the 2011–2015 period. Funding Type: The Fair Sentencing Act does not provide direct funding but results in cost savings due to reduced incarceration times

34 The specific spending details for DACA are not readily available, as it is an administrative policy rather than a law with direct appropriations. However, the program has led to significant economic contributions from DACA recipients. See American Immigration Council (n.d.), https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/deferred_action_for_childhood_arrivals_daca_an_overview.pdf

35 FY2023 — U.S. Department of Education, Office of Migrant Education. (2023). Migrant Education Program (MEP) funding and services overview. <https://www.ed.gov/about/ed-offices/oese/office-of-migrant-education>

36 FY2023 — U.S. Department of the Treasury, USAspending.gov. (2023). Federal account spending overview: 075-1503. https://www.usaspending.gov/federal_account/075-1503

37 FY2023 — U.S. Department of the Treasury, USAspending.gov (2023). Federal account spending overview: 075-1503.

Table 6. Summary of Current HMY Federal Policies

Federal Policy Name & Agencies	Focus Population/s	Summary
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ED (OSEP) \$13.4 billion ³⁸	Students Experiencing Homelessness, Foster Youth, Justice-Involved youth, and Migrant Youth	Purpose: IDEA ensures that all children with disabilities, including HMY, receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). It mandates that states provide special education services, develop individualized education plans (IEPs), and offer procedural safeguards to protect students' rights. Key Provisions: • Child Find: Schools must identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities, including those experiencing homelessness, in foster care, involved in the juvenile justice system, or from migrant backgrounds. • Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): Ensures that children with disabilities, including those in unstable situations, receive an education tailored to their individual needs at no cost to their families. • Individualized Education Program (IEP): Schools must create and implement an IEP for each eligible student, outlining their learning goals and required services. IEPs must be updated and transferred efficiently between schools or institutions to accommodate the mobility of HMY. • Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): Requires that children with disabilities, including HMY, are educated alongside their non-disabled peers to the greatest extent appropriate. Schools must first provide necessary accommodations and services within general education settings before considering more restrictive placements. Students cannot be unnecessarily segregated solely due to disability or mobility status.
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) ED, OSSE, DOJ	Students Experiencing Homelessness, Justice-Involved Youth, and Migrant Youth	Purpose: ESSA includes provisions specifically designed to support the education of homeless youth. While primarily focused on education, it also provides protections for justice-involved youth, ensuring they receive appropriate educational services. Additionally, ESSA supports the education of migrant youth, including English language learners and students who have experienced educational disruptions. Key Provisions: • Educational Stability: Ensures homeless students can remain in their school of origin, even if they move, and requires that schools provide transportation to and from the school of origin. • Liaison Requirements: Mandates that every school district designate a local educational agency (LEA) liaison for students experiencing homelessness to identify, enroll, and support them, ensuring they have equal access to educational opportunities. • Justice-Involved Youth: Requires states to support the educational needs of youth in juvenile justice facilities, including facilitating a smooth transition back to their community schools and providing continued access to high-quality education as part of Title I, Part D. • Migrant Students: Requires schools to identify and support the needs of migrant students, including English language learners. • Academic Support: Provides funding for programs that help migrant youth meet challenging academic standards. • Parental Engagement: Supports parental involvement and ensures that migrant parents have opportunities to participate in their children's education. Collaboration and Integration: ESSA emphasizes collaboration and integration across various services and agencies. For example, it requires states to develop and implement statewide plans in consultation with teachers, principals, school administrators, paraprofessionals, specialized instructional support personnel, and other stakeholders. It also mandates coordination of services for students experiencing homelessness, including collaboration with local educational agencies (LEAs) and community-based organizations to ensure equitable access to educational resources.

38 For FY2019 spending, see the Congressional Research Service (2019) <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/r/r44624>.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act ED, HUD, HHS, GSA \$125 million ³⁹	Students Experiencing Homelessness	Purpose: The McKinney-Vento Act is the primary federal law ensuring educational access and stability for homeless children and youth. It provides funding for emergency housing, transportation assistance, and wraparound services. Key Provisions: • Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY): Guarantees immediate enrollment and continued school stability for homeless students, regardless of documentation or residency status. Schools must identify homeless students, remove barriers to enrollment, and provide transportation to their school of origin. • Homeless Assistance Grants: Funds local Continuum of Care (CoC) programs to provide permanent housing solutions, rapid rehousing, and transitional services for homeless youth and families. Collaboration and Integration: The McKinney-Vento Act mandates cross-agency coordination between State Educational Agencies (SEAs), Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), and community-based organizations to deliver comprehensive services to homeless children and youths. It requires schools, housing agencies, and social services to collaborate on removing barriers to school access and providing wraparound supports.
Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) HHS, ACF, FYSB, AYCF \$140 million ⁴⁰	Students Experiencing Homelessness	Purpose: The RHYA provides grant funding for programs supporting runaway and homeless youth, including emergency services, long-term housing, and transitional living programs. Key Provisions: • Basic Center Program (BCP): Emergency shelter, food, clothing, and crisis intervention for runaway and homeless youth. • Transitional Living Program (TLP): Provides long-term housing and independent living support to homeless youth aged 16-22, including life skills training, case management, and educational assistance. • Street Outreach Program (SOP): Funds street-based services to connect homeless youth with housing, crisis intervention, healthcare, and other essential resources. Collaboration and Integration: The RHYA requires interagency collaboration to ensure proper coordination, referral, and services for homeless and runaway youth. It mandates coordination with local homeless education liaisons and community organizations to support access to education, housing, and healthcare.
Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) HUD	Students Experiencing Homelessness	Purpose: Administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), YHDP provides grant funding for local communities to develop and implement innovative, community-driven strategies to reduce youth homelessness. Key Provisions: • Funds local initiatives to prevent and reduce youth homelessness, emphasizing collaboration among local governments, service providers, and other stakeholders. Collaboration and Integration: The YHDP promotes equitable, community driven responses to youth homelessness by prioritizing collaboration across multiple agencies and stakeholders. It ensures that youth who are disproportionately more likely to experience homelessness—such as Black, Indigenous, Hispanic, and LGBTQIA+ youth—receive targeted support. It also requires communities to develop Coordinated Community Plans (CCP) that integrate child welfare, housing, education, and social services to address youth homelessness comprehensively.
Affordable Care Act (ACA) Provisions HHS, HUD, ED	Students Experiencing Homelessness	Purpose: The ACA expands healthcare access, which is particularly important for homeless youth who often face significant barriers to receiving medical care. It includes provisions to help homeless and runaway youth access healthcare. Key Provisions: • Expands Medicaid eligibility for homeless youth, funds community health centers, and allows youth to remain on their parents' health insurance until age 26, a critical protection for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Collaboration and Integration: The ACA promotes collaboration and integration across various services and agencies. For example, it incentivizes integrated and coordinated models of care, such as accountable care organizations, and promotes delivery models that reduce fragmentation in health services. It also includes provisions for the coordination and integration of acute and long-term care to ensure consistent medical support for vulnerable youth.

39 For FY2024 spending, see the National Center for Homeless Education (n.d.) <https://nche.ed.gov/legislation/mckinney-vento/> and the U.S. Department of Education (n.d.) <https://www.ed.gov/grants-and-programs/formula-grants/formula-grants-special-populations/education-for-homeless-children-and-youths#funding-status-awards>.

40 For FY2023 spending, see National Network for Youth (2025) <https://nn4youth.org/2025/01/30/federal-funding-freeze-what-happened-and-whats-ahead/> and the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations (n.d.) <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/subtitle-B/chapter-XIII/subchapter-F/part-1351>.

Continuum of Care (CoC) Program HUD	Students Experiencing Homelessness	Purpose: HUD's Continuum of Care (CoC) Program supports homeless individuals, families, and youth in achieving self-sufficiency and stable housing. It fosters community-wide planning and promotes strategic resource allocation to reduce homelessness, including among youth. The program partners with nonprofit organizations, states, tribal governments, and local agencies. Key Provisions: - Provides funding for local homeless assistance programs, including transitional housing, permanent housing, supportive services. - Maintains the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) for data collection and service coordination. - Supports long-term, evidence-based strategies to reduce homelessness, including youth-specific interventions. Collaboration and Integration: CoC facilitates access to federally funded services for homeless individuals and families. It also mandates a Continuum of Care framework for each geographic area to coordinate housing, social services, and educational supports.
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) USDA	Students Experiencing Homelessness	Purpose: Formerly known as food stamps, SNAP provides food assistance to low-income individuals, including homeless youth. Key Provisions: - Allows homeless youth under 18 to apply for SNAP benefits without parental consent in certain circumstances. - Provides access to food assistance for homeless youth experiencing housing instability. Collaboration and Integration: The SNAP-Ed program coordinates efforts with other federal programs. It works with community and State Departments of Health, Agriculture, and Education on joint nutrition education and obesity prevention initiatives.
Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) HHS, ACF	Students Experiencing the Foster System	Purpose: This act prioritizes the safety, permanency, and well-being of children in the foster care system. It seeks permanent placements, including adoption, when family reunification is not viable. Key Provisions: - Requires states to adhere to defined timelines for achieving permanent placements. - Offers federal incentives to states that successfully increase adoption rates. - Mandates the preservation and transfer of health and educational records for children in foster care. Collaboration and Integration: The Act mandates collaboration and integration across various services and agencies. States must establish health coordination strategies alongside the state Medicaid agency and other experts. Additionally, it integrates tribal child welfare agencies into federally funded adoption programs.
Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act HHS, ACF	Students Experiencing the Foster System	Purpose: This law aims to improve outcomes for children in foster care by promoting family connections, improving education and health care, and extending support for older youth aging out of the system. Key Provisions: Extends foster care eligibility to age 21, requires states to coordinate educational stability, and allows states to use federal funds for kinship guardianship assistance. Collaboration and Integration: The Act emphasizes collaboration and integration across various services and agencies. For example, it requires states to develop a health oversight and coordination plan in collaboration with the state Medicaid agency and other experts. It also mandates the inclusion of tribal child welfare agencies in federal funding programs.

Family First Prevention Services Act Under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act ACF, CB	Students Experiencing the Foster System, Justice-Involved Youth	Purpose: FFPSA shifts the focus from placing children in foster care to preventing family separation whenever safely possible by funding services that strengthen families. Although primarily aimed at child welfare, the FFPSA also supports justice-involved youth by funding programs that reduce system involvement through family preservation and community-based services. Key Provisions: - Expands federal funds for evidence-based preventive services, including mental health treatment, substance use disorder services, and in-home parenting programs to reduce reliance on foster care placements. - Limits the use of group homes by promoting kinship care and family-based placements whenever possible. - Strengthens mental health, substance use, and parenting programs to help families remain intact and prevent unnecessary out-of-home placements. Collaboration and/or Integration: Requires state agencies administering the Substance Use Prevention and Treatment Block Grant to be active partners in federally funded prevention initiatives. Additionally, it mandates an electronic interstate case-processing system to streamline and expedite the placement of children across state lines in foster care, guardianship, or adoption.⁴¹
Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (Chafee Program) ACF, HHS	Students Experiencing the Foster System	Purpose: This program supports older youth transitioning out of foster care, providing resources to promote self-sufficiency and stability. Key Provisions: - Provides funding services such as education, vocational training, career development, employment, housing, and financial management. - Expands Medicaid eligibility to age 26 for former foster youth who were in care at age 18. - Offers financial assistance and case management support to help youth transition successfully into adulthood Collaboration and Integration: Requires states to collaborate with public and private entities to help youth in foster care achieve independence. Additionally, it mandates that youth be directly involved in developing their transition plans, which include options for housing, postsecondary education, and employment support.
Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program ACF, ED	Students Experiencing the Foster System	Purpose: The ETV program offers financial assistance for post-secondary education and training to youth who have aged out of foster care. Key Provisions: Provides up to \$5,000 per year to eligible youth to help cover higher education expenses, including tuition, fees, room and board, and other education-related costs. Collaboration and Integration: The ETV program emphasizes collaboration between state child welfare agencies and postsecondary institutions to support foster youth in their educational pursuits. For example, it requires coordination with financial aid offices to ensure that ETV funds are used effectively and supplement, rather than replace, other forms of student aid.
Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) BIA	Students Experiencing the Foster System	Purpose: ICWA aims to protect the stability and security of Native American families and tribes by giving preference to placing Native American children in foster or adoptive homes that reflect their tribal heritage. Key Provisions: Placement Standards: Establishes standards for the placement of Native American children in foster and adoptive homes, prioritizing placement with relatives, tribal members, or other Native American families., Tribal Jurisdiction: Grants tribal governments the right to intervene in state custody proceedings and, in some cases, exclusive jurisdiction over child welfare cases involving Native children. Family Preservation: Requires states to take proactive measures to prevent family separation and prioritize reunification before considering foster care or adoption." Collaboration and Integration: The ICWA emphasizes coordination between state and tribal child welfare agencies. For example, it requires states to notify tribes of child custody proceedings involving Indian children and to collaborate with tribes to provide support and services.

⁴¹ For more information, see the Family First Act resource page: <https://familyfirstact.org/resources/public-law-no-115-123>.

Supporting Normalcy and Empowering Foster Youth Act ACF, HHS	Students Experiencing the Foster System	Purpose: Part of broader legislation, this act focuses on allowing foster youth to engage in age-appropriate activities and removing unnecessary restrictions that impede their development. Key Provisions: Encourages states to adopt the reasonable and prudent parent standard to allow foster parents to make age-appropriate decisions regarding the daily activities of foster youth, fostering a sense of normalcy. Collaboration and Integration: The act emphasizes coordination between child welfare agencies, caregivers, and other stakeholders to ensure foster youth have access to developmentally appropriate activities. It includes provisions for the reasonable and prudent parent standard, which allows caregivers to make decisions about the child's participation in activities.
Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) DOJ, JJDP, ED, HHS, HUD, DOI, DOL, ICE, CNCS	Justice-Involved Youth	Purpose: The JJDP seeks to improve the juvenile justice system by funding state-level prevention programs, promoting fair treatment of youth, and reducing systemic disparities. The OJJDP, within the U.S. Department of Justice, supports state and local efforts to prevent delinquency and enhance juvenile justice policies. Key Provisions: Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO): Prohibits the detention of youth for offenses that would not be considered crimes if committed by adults (e.g., truancy, running away). Sight and Sound Separation: Requires that juveniles be separated from adults in detention facilities. Jail Removal: Mandates that juveniles not be held in adult jails except under specific circumstances. Racial and Ethnic Disparities (RED) Initiative: Requires states to address and reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system. Mentoring Programs: OJJDP funds mentoring programs that connect justice-involved youth to positive role models. Juvenile Drug Courts: Supports juvenile drug court programs that focus on rehabilitation and treatment rather than incarceration for substance abuse offenses. Youth Violence Prevention: Funds initiatives aimed at reducing youth violence, providing support for at-risk youth. Collaboration and Integration: The JJDP emphasizes collaboration among federal, state, and local governments to better serve at-risk youth. It also integrates evidence-based research into all programs, grants, and initiatives. The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act established the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to improve juvenile justice and delinquency prevention coordination. The Council includes representatives from multiple federal agencies and practitioners in the field.
Second Chance Act BJA, OJJDP, OJP	Justice-Involved Youth	Purpose: This act supports reentry programs for individuals returning to communities from prisons, jails, and juvenile facilities, with a focus on reducing recidivism and improving outcomes. Key Provisions: Provides grants to government agencies and nonprofit organizations for reentry programs that address education, employment, housing, mental health, and substance use disorder treatment for justice-involved individuals, including youth. Collaboration and Integration: The Second Chance Act emphasizes collaboration among federal, state, and local governments, as well as nonprofit organizations. It supports cross-sector collaboration to enhance reentry services, including education, employment, housing, and substance abuse treatment.
Youth PROMISE Act DOJ	Justice-Involved Youth	Purpose: The Youth PROMISE Act focuses on preventing youth delinquency and gang involvement through community-based intervention programs. Key Provisions: Supports local governments and agencies in developing comprehensive strategies that include evidence-based prevention and intervention programs, mentoring, and family engagement to reduce juvenile delinquency and criminal involvement. Collaboration and Integration: The Youth PROMISE Act emphasizes collaboration among local stakeholders, including law enforcement, schools, social services, health agencies, and community organizations. It requires the formation of PROMISE Coordinating Councils to develop and implement comprehensive prevention and intervention strategies.

Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO) Program Authorized under WIOA DOL, ETA	Justice-Involved Youth	Purpose: This program, administered by the U.S. Department of Labor, helps justice-involved youth and adults reintegrate into society through employment and training services. Key Provisions: Provides grants to organizations that offer job training, education, and supportive services to help justice-involved youth secure stable employment and avoid recidivism. Collaboration and Integration: The REO program promotes collaboration and coordination between community-based organizations, foundations, state and local justice agencies, community colleges, and the workforce system. It also emphasizes the use of evidence-based practices and evaluation to continuously improve program effectiveness.
Fair Sentencing Act USSC, DOJ	Justice-Involved Youth	Purpose: The Fair Sentencing Act reduced the disparity in sentencing between crack and powder cocaine offenses, which disproportionately affected Black and other racial minority youth. Key Provisions: Reduces mandatory minimum sentences for certain offenses and allows for retroactive sentence reductions, impacting justice-involved youth convicted under the previous sentencing guidelines. Collaboration and Integration: The Act directs the United States Sentencing Commission to review and amend federal sentencing guidelines to ensure fairness and consistency. It also requires the Commission to study and report on the impact of these changes.
Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) USCIS, DHS	Migrant Youth	Purpose: DACA is a policy that allows certain undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States as children (often referred to as “Dreamers”) to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation and become eligible for a work permit. Key Provisions: - Provides protection from deportation for eligible youth. - Grants eligibility for work authorization, allowing recipients to legally work in the U.S. - Does not provide a path to citizenship but offers temporary relief and stability. Collaboration and Integration: DACA emphasizes collaboration between federal agencies, such as USCIS and DHS, to process applications and renewals. It also integrates with other immigration policies to ensure that eligible individuals can receive deferred action and work authorization.
Migrant Education Program (MEP) ED, OESE, OME	Migrant Youth	Purpose: The MEP, established under Title I, Part C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), provides funding to ensure that migrant children have access to quality education and can overcome educational disruption caused by frequent moves. Key Provisions: - Supports educational programs that address the unique needs of migrant children. - Provides supplemental academic instruction, health services, and social support to help migrant youth in school. - Ensures that migrant children achieve high academic standards and graduate from high school. Collaboration and Integration: The MEP emphasizes collaboration between state and local educational agencies, as well as other organizations serving migratory children. For example, it promotes coordination with programs like Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), and the High School Equivalency Program (HEP).
Unaccompanied Children (UC) Program ORR, ACF, HHS	Migrant Youth	Purpose: The UC Program, managed by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), provides care and services to unaccompanied minors who enter the U.S. without a parent or legal guardian. Key Provisions: - Provides shelter, medical care, legal services, and educational opportunities for unaccompanied children. - Identifies and reunites unaccompanied minors with family members or places them with suitable sponsors in the U.S. - Offers specialized services, including mental health support and trauma-informed care. Collaboration and Integration: The program emphasizes collaboration between federal agencies, such as ORR and DHS, to ensure the care and placement of unaccompanied children. It also involves partnerships with state-licensed shelters and community organizations to provide comprehensive services.

Refugee Resettlement Program ORR, RAP, DHS	Migrant Youth	Purpose: Administered by the ORR, this program supports the resettlement of refugees, including refugee youth, who have fled persecution and conflict in their home countries. Key Provisions: • Provides initial resettlement assistance, including housing, healthcare, education, and employment services. • Offers targeted support for refugee youth, including education, language acquisition, and mental health services. • Facilitates the integration of refugee families into U.S. communities, with an emphasis on self-sufficiency. • Provides legal protections, including access to legal representation and the ability to apply for asylum or other forms of relief.
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Table 7. Current HMY Federal Policies and Links to Law Text

Federal Law Name	Links to Federal Law Text
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/COMPS-755/pdf/COMPS-755.pdf
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)	https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ95/PLAW-114publ95.pdf
McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act	https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/HAAA_HEARTH.PDF
Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program	https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/cfo/gmomgmt/grantsinfo/fundingopps/YHDP
Continuum of Care (CoC) Program	https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-24/subtitle-B/chapter-V/subchapter-C/part-578
Runaway and Homeless Youth Act	https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/5191/text
Affordable Care Act (ACA) Provisions	https://www.congress.gov/111/plaws/publ148/PLAW-111publ148.pdf
Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act	https://www.congress.gov/110/plaws/publ351/PLAW-110publ351.pdf
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/42/1758
Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA)	https://www.congress.gov/105/plaws/publ89/PLAW-105publ89.pdf
Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)	https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1892
Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (Chafee Program)	https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/42/677
Supporting Normalcy and Empowering Foster Youth Act	https://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/PrudentParenting/JLC-NormalcyGuide-2015FINAL.pdf
Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program	https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/chafee-education-and-training-voucher-etv-program-state-etv-factsheets
Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)	https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/25/chapter-21
Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP)	https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title34/subtitle1/chapter111&edition=prelim
Second Chance Act	https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/house-bill/1593/text
Youth PROMISE Act⁴²	https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1770/text
Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO) Program	https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/reentry
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)	https://juvenilecouncil.ojp.gov/legislation
Fair Sentencing Act	https://www.congress.gov/111/plaws/publ220/PLAW-111publ220.pdf
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/COMPS-755/pdf/COMPS-755.pdf
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)	https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ95/PLAW-114publ95.pdf
McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act	https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/HAAA_HEARTH.PDF
Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program	https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/cfo/gmomgmt/grantsinfo/fundingopps/YHDP
Continuum of Care (CoC) Program	https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-24/subtitle-B/chapter-V/subchapter-C/part-578
Runaway and Homeless Youth Act	https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/5191/text
Affordable Care Act (ACA) Provisions	https://www.congress.gov/111/plaws/publ148/PLAW-111publ148.pdf
Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act	https://www.congress.gov/110/plaws/publ351/PLAW-110publ351.pdf
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/42/1758
Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA)	https://www.congress.gov/105/plaws/publ89/PLAW-105publ89.pdf
Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)	https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1892
Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (Chafee Program)	https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/42/677

⁴² PROMISE stands for Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support, and Education.

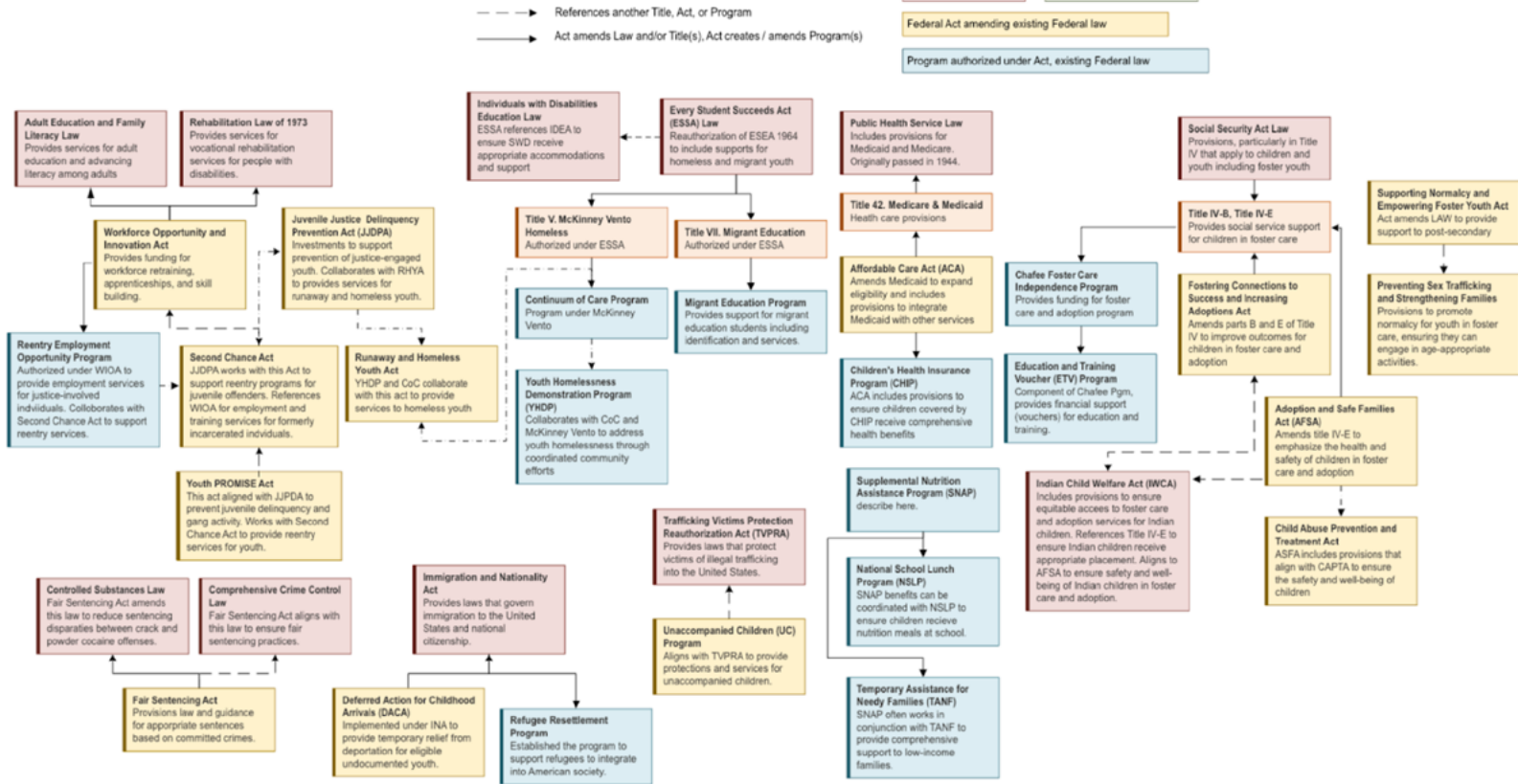
Supporting Normalcy and Empowering Foster Youth Act	https://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/PrudentParenting/JLC-NormalcyGuide-2015FINAL.pdf
Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program	https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/chafee-education-and-training-voucher-etv-program-state-etv-factsheets
Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)	https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/25/chapter-21
Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP)	https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title34/subtitle1/chapter111&edition=prelim
Second Chance Act	https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/house-bill/1593/text
Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)	https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-8/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-236/subpart-C
Migrant Education Program	https://results.ed.gov/legislation
Unaccompanied Children (UC) Program	https://www.hhs.gov/programs/social-services/unaccompanied-children/index.html
Refugee Resettlement Program	https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/subtitle-B/chapter-IV/part-400

Table 8. Table of Current HMY Federal Policies and References to Other Federal Laws

Federal Law Name	Links to Federal Law Text
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)	McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: ESSA includes provisions to support the education of homeless children and youth, ensuring their access to education. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): ESSA references IDEA to ensure that students with disabilities receive appropriate accommodations and support.
McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act	Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): The McKinney-Vento Act is reauthorized under ESSA, emphasizing the educational rights of homeless children and youth. Runaway and Homeless Youth Act: Collaborates with programs under this act to provide comprehensive support to homeless youth.
Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP)	Continuum of Care (CoC) Program: YHDP works in conjunction with CoC to address youth homelessness through coordinated community efforts. Runaway and Homeless Youth Act: Collaborates with programs under this act to provide services to homeless youth.
Continuum of Care (CoC) Program	McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: CoC is authorized under this act to promote community-wide commitment to ending homelessness. Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP): Collaboration with YHDP to address youth homelessness.
Affordable Care Act (ACA)	Medicaid: The ACA expands Medicaid eligibility and includes provisions to integrate Medicaid with other services. Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP): The ACA includes provisions to ensure that children covered by CHIP receive comprehensive health benefits.
Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act	Social Security Act: This act amends parts B and E of title IV of the Social Security Act to improve outcomes for children in foster care and adoption. Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA): The act includes provisions to ensure equitable access to foster care and adoption services for Indian children.
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	National School Lunch Program (NSLP): SNAP benefits can be coordinated with NSLP to ensure children receive nutritious meals at school. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): SNAP often works in conjunction with TANF to provide comprehensive support to low-income families.
Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA)	Social Security Act: ASFA amends title IV-E of the Social Security Act to emphasize the health and safety of children in foster care and adoption. Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA): ASFA includes provisions that align with CAPTA to ensure the safety and well-being of children.
Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (Chafee Program)	Social Security Act: The Chafee Program is part of Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, which provides funding for foster care and adoption assistance. Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program: This program is a component of the Chafee Program, providing financial support for post-secondary education and training.
Supporting Normalcy and Empowering Foster Youth Act	Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act: This act includes provisions to promote normalcy for youth in foster care, ensuring they can engage in age-appropriate activities.
Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program	Chafee Foster Care Independence Program: The ETV Program is part of the Chafee Program, providing vouchers for education and training to youth aging out of foster care.
Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)	Social Security Act: ICWA references Title IV-E for foster care and adoption assistance to ensure Indian children receive appropriate placements. Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA): Aligns with ASFA to ensure the safety and well-being of Native American children in foster care and adoption.
Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act	Runaway and Homeless Youth Act: JJDP Act collaborates with this act to provide services to runaway and homeless youth. Second Chance Act: JJDP Act works with the Second Chance Act to support reentry programs for juvenile offenders.

Second Chance Act	Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP): The Second Chance Act collaborates with JJDP to support reentry programs for juvenile offenders. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA): References WIOA for employment and training services for formerly incarcerated individuals.
Youth PROMISE Act	Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP): The Youth PROMISE Act aligns with JJDP to prevent juvenile delinquency and gang activity. Second Chance Act: Works with the Second Chance Act to provide reentry services for youth.
Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO) Program	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA): The REO Program is authorized under WIOA to provide employment services for justice-involved individuals. Second Chance Act: The REO Program collaborates with the Second Chance Act to support reentry services.
Fair Sentencing Act	Controlled Substances Act: Amends Controlled Substances Act to reduce sentencing disparities between crack and powder cocaine offenses. Comprehensive Crime Control Act: The Fair Sentencing Act aligns with this act to ensure fair sentencing practices.
Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)	Immigration and Nationality Act (INA): DACA is implemented under the INA to provide temporary relief from deportation for eligible undocumented youth.
Migrant Education Program	Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA): The Migrant Education Program is authorized under ESEA to provide educational support for migrant children.
Unaccompanied Children (UC) Program	Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA): The UC Program aligns with TVPRA to provide protections and services for unaccompanied children.
Refugee Resettlement Program	Immigration and Nationality Act (INA): Authorized under the INA to provide support for refugees. Refugee Act of 1980: Established RRP to assist refugees in integrating into American society.

Figure 3. Map of HMY Federal Law, Acts, and Programs: Landscape of References and Coordination Between Laws



APPENDIX B: STATE HMY POLICIES

A variety of state policies across the U.S. prioritize housing-insecure, foster, justice-involved, and migrant youth by addressing their unique challenges and supporting educational stability, access to services, and smooth transitions between schools and placements. These policies often go beyond federal mandates to provide targeted services such as mental health care, tutoring, housing assistance, and reentry support, ensuring that HMY succeed academically and socially.

Table 10. State HMY Policies and Areas of Focus

Student Population/s	Areas of Focus
Students Experiencing Homelessness, Foster Youth, & Migrant Youth	Education Stability Grants (ESG)⁴³: States such as Colorado have established ESGs to support the educational stability of highly mobile students, including youth in foster care, those experiencing homelessness, and migrant students. These grants aim to reduce educational barriers by providing academic and social-emotional services and require collaboration with state and local agencies, such as child welfare departments.
Students Experiencing Homelessness	• Education Stability Laws: States such as Washington, Illinois, and California have laws that align with the federal McKinney-Vento Act, offering additional support such as school transportation and priority enrollment for homeless students. • State-Funded Homeless Youth Shelters and Services: States such as Minnesota and Massachusetts allocate dedicated funding for shelters and outreach services targeting homeless youth, providing safe housing, crisis intervention, and education. • Safe Harbor Laws: Many states, including New York and Florida, have enacted Safe Harbor laws that protect homeless youth, especially those involved in trafficking or exploitation, by diverting them away from the criminal justice system and into supportive services. • Host Home Programs: States such as Colorado have implemented programs that pair homeless youth with volunteer host families to provide temporary housing in a stable environment while they work towards independent living. • Youth Homelessness Prevention Programs: States such as Connecticut have enacted policies that provide mediation services, emergency assistance, and financial support to families to prevent youth from becoming homeless.
Students Experiencing Foster Care	• Extended Foster Care: Many states, such as California, New York, and Texas, extend foster care services beyond age 18, often up to age 21, to provide ongoing support for youth transitioning to independence. • Foster Youth Education and Employment Programs: States such as California, through its Chafee Education and Training Voucher Program, provide tuition waivers, scholarships, and other educational supports specifically for foster youth attending colleges or vocational programs. • Foster Youth Bill of Rights: Some states, such as Texas and California, have established Foster Youth Bills of Rights to ensure that youth in foster care are aware of their rights regarding education, privacy, health care, and participation in case plans. • Transitional Housing Programs: States such as Washington and Ohio offer transitional housing programs that provide housing and support services for foster youth aging out of the system to prevent homelessness. • Sibling Connection Programs: States such as Oregon have enacted policies aimed at maintaining sibling connections for foster youth, ensuring siblings are placed together when possible or have regular visitation rights.

⁴³ Education Stability Grant pursuant to Colorado House Bill 18-1306 and Colorado Revised Statute § 22-32-138. Application Information Webinar, April 2022.

Migrant Youth	• Migrant Education Programs: States such as Texas, Florida, and California provide additional educational support for migrant youth through state-funded programs that offer tutoring, summer programs, and language acquisition services. • State-Level DACA and Tuition Equity Laws: States such as California, New York, and New Jersey have policies that allow undocumented and DACA-eligible students to qualify for in-state tuition rates and state financial aid at public colleges and universities. • Bilingual and Multilingual Education Programs: States such as New Mexico, Illinois, and Texas have enacted policies supporting bilingual education and English language learning programs in public schools, addressing the needs of migrant youth. • Legal Aid and Advocacy for Unaccompanied Minors: States such as Maryland and Massachusetts allocate funding to legal aid programs specifically to assist unaccompanied migrant children with navigating the immigration process. • Health Care Access for Migrant Youth: States such as California provide state-funded health care services to all children, regardless of immigration status, ensuring that migrant youth have access to necessary medical care. • Driver's Licenses for Undocumented Youth: States such as California, Illinois, and Maryland allow undocumented individuals, including youth, to obtain driver's licenses, which can be essential for accessing education and employment opportunities.
Justice-Involved Youth	• Juvenile Justice Reform Acts: States such as New Jersey, California, and Georgia have implemented reforms to their juvenile justice systems, prioritizing rehabilitation over punishment and emphasizing community-based programs, diversion, and restorative justice approaches. • Raise the Age Legislation: Many states, including New York and North Carolina, have raised the age of criminal responsibility, ensuring that most youth under 18 are processed in the juvenile justice system rather than the adult system. • Community-Based Alternatives to Incarceration: States such as Ohio and Oregon allocate funding to community-based programs that provide intensive supervision, counseling, and job training as alternatives to juvenile detention centers. • Youth Reentry Programs: States such as Michigan and Pennsylvania offer reentry programs for justice-involved youth that provide job training, mentoring, educational support, and housing assistance to facilitate a successful transition back into the community. • Sealing and Expungement of Juvenile Records: States such as Illinois and California have enacted legislation to streamline processes for sealing or expunging juvenile records, reducing barriers to employment, education, and housing for affected youth.