

NEWS RELEASE

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Media Contact: Crystal Greene, crystal.greene@state.or.us, (503) 947-5650**Oregon Schools See Record Number of Homeless Students Despite
Improvements in the Economy***District homeless liaisons rally to meet increased need for services*

(Salem, Ore) – During the 2014-15 school year, Oregon school districts served 20,524 K-12 students experiencing homelessness. This represents an 8% increase over the prior school year and brings the homeless student count up to levels not seen since the 2010-11 school year. The majority of the increase was in the number of students identified as “unsheltered,” meaning they live in vehicles, tents, and other forms of substandard housing.

“Despite an improving economy, many Oregon families are still struggling just to meet their most basic needs,” Deputy Superintendent Salam Noor said. “Far too many children don’t know where their next meal is coming from or where they will sleep at night. The significant increase in homeless youth – particularly in unsheltered youth – is deeply troubling. However, I know that this is an issue that our local communities, social services partners, and schools are working to address. I am very proud of the good work done by our school district homeless liaisons to reach out to students and families and provide support during such a challenging time.”

Every Oregon school district employs a homeless liaison who identifies and provides services and support to students experiencing homelessness. These liaisons not only help keep students in school, but they also work with students and families to connect them with social services and other resources to help them get back on their feet. Families needing support can access a list of district liaisons online at: <http://www.ode.state.or.us/Go/HomelessEd>. A poster describing rights and eligibility can be found [here](#). In addition, families can receive assistance with housing, food, and other services – including contacts for their local district liaison – by calling 211.

“Our homeless liaisons do incredible work identifying and supporting students and families and connecting them to vital community services,” said Oregon Department of Education Homeless Specialist Dona Bolt. “For many of our families, the economic recovery has not yet become a reality. Families are still looking for work, struggling to get by, and trying to provide a sense of stability to their children. It is critical that we all work together to address the complex underlying issues and get more children – and adults – into permanent and stable housing.”

Under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Program, students are identified as homeless if they are: living in a shelter, residing in a motel, sharing housing due to economic hardship, or living in an unsheltered situation such as a vehicle, tent, or other substandard housing. The number of children and youth in shelters has remained steady in recent years, a sign that capacity has been reached and new shelter beds are not available. The largest increases came from the numbers of children living in motels (a 14% increase) and the number of unsheltered youth (a 19% increase). The number of homeless students who are unaccompanied by parents or guardians also increased by 6.5%, to 3,321. The vast majority of homeless youth, both in Oregon and nationally, are living in doubled up housing due to economic hardship. For homeless counts by living situation, [click here](#).

Homeless is not just limited to our urban centers. While the largest numbers of children experiencing homelessness are in urban districts such as Beaverton, Reynolds, Portland, and Medford, small rural districts such as Butte Falls, McKenzie, and Culver also have high percentages of homeless youth. For homeless counts by school district, [click here](#). For additional data on youth homelessness in Oregon, [click here](#).

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