

Delaware

Moving the Needle on Youth Homelessness

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

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

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

Quick Facts & Stats

State Ranking:

15

Overall score 2019:

54

Overall score 2018:

38

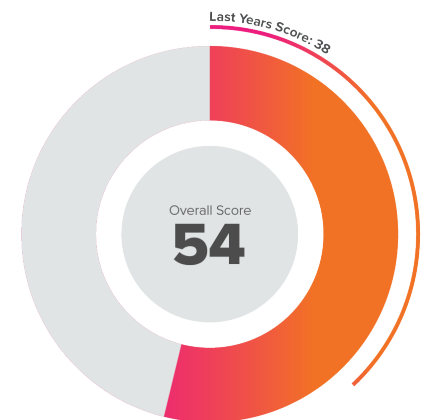
Performance Breakdown:

Law & Policy: 46% of metrics met

- Laws authorizing comprehensive supports and services for youth experiencing homelessness: 67% of metrics met
- Preventing youth experiencing homelessness from coming into contact with the criminal and juvenile justice systems: 71% of metrics met
- Providing unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness the opportunity to seek legal independence and live independently: 38% of metrics met
- Addressing the educational needs of youth experiencing homelessness: 0% of metrics met
- Allowing youth experiencing homelessness to access critical supports and services: 61% of metrics met

Systems: 22% of metrics met

Environment: 0% of metrics met



State Highlights

Recommendations for Improvement

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

Overview



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

Law & Policy



- The state has a law similar to the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) that provides funding for emergency services and other supports to prevent and end youth homelessness.
- State law does not specifically criminalize running away.
- The state allows shelters to take in homeless youth with a delay or waiver of notification requirements.
- State law provides partial or full contract rights for youth experiencing homelessness.
- The state allows unaccompanied youth under 18 to apply for health insurance coverage on their own.

- Enact a state law that allows youth in need of care to receive services without court involvement.
- Implement a grievance process for students experiencing homelessness that complies with federal law.

Systems



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

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

Environment



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

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