

Unhoused Youth in Marion County

Key Facts & Data

22,114

Homeless Pre-K–12 students statewide, 2023–24, up 44% from the 2020–21 low

28%

Of Indiana's homeless students lived in Marion County, 2022–23 — the largest share of any county

+24%

Rise in chronic homelessness in Marion County, 2024–2025, to roughly 400 people

Indianapolis Star, "Youth homelessness in Indiana: An invisible — but not hopeless — struggle," July 29, 2025

~50%

of adults experiencing homelessness report first experiencing homelessness between ages 14 and 24.

Chapin Hall, 2025



Sources: Indianapolis Star, "Youth homelessness in Indiana: An invisible — but not hopeless — struggle," July 29, 2025; SchoolHouse Connection / Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan; Coalition for Homelessness Intervention and Prevention (CHIP), Brightlane Learning, Chapin Hall, 2025

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IS PREVENTABLE.

Invest in a comprehensive youth homelessness strategy that prioritizes prevention, expands affordable and supportive housing, strengthens cross-system coordination, and ensures every young person has a safe, stable place to call home.

Every year, thousands of children, youth, and young adults in Marion County experience housing instability. While homelessness is often associated with shelters or living outdoors, many young people experience it through couch surfing, frequent moves, or staying temporarily with friends or relatives—making the crisis largely invisible.

Without stable housing, young people are more likely to struggle in school, experience poor physical and mental health, become involved with child welfare or juvenile justice systems, and face homelessness into adulthood. Investing in prevention and housing stability is significantly less costly than responding to repeated crises.

Homelessness among Indiana's children and youth is rising faster than the state's overall homeless population — and Marion County carries a disproportionate share of that burden.

The Disparities

31% vs. 11% Black or African American students accounted for 31% of Indiana students experiencing homelessness, while making up approximately 11% of the state's overall student population in 2022–23.

Brightlane Learning Homeless Education 2024 Report

Homelessness Affects Learning

57% vs. 82% Only 57% of students experiencing homelessness demonstrated proficiency on third-grade early literacy assessments, compared with 82% of housed students.

Brightlane Learning Homeless Education 2024 Report

POLICY OPPORTUNITIES

To effectively address youth homelessness in Marion County, policymakers, community leaders, educators, and funders must act with **intention and urgency**.

- 1 Expand affordable housing and eviction-prevention resources for families with children.
- 2 Strengthen school-based identification and supports for students experiencing homelessness.
- 3 Invest in targeted services for unaccompanied youth and young adults, and address racial disparities in housing.
- 4 Prioritize prevention and early intervention over emergency response after a young person becomes chronically unhoused.

Bottom Line:

Housing instability is linked to poorer educational outcomes, increased health risks, and greater involvement with public systems.

Marion County Commission on Youth

MCCOY is a non-partisan and independent non-profit organization that champions the positive development of youth through leadership on key issues and support of the youth development professional community. MCCOY serves as an advocate on behalf of youth policy, promoting positive practices and effective policies by:

- Educating leaders and community members about key youth development issues
- Supporting formal and informal policies that provide young people with the opportunities they need to succeed
- Consulting and empowering young people to be advocates for their own community goals

PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

Youth Well-Being

All youth should be safe, nurtured, and free from abuse, neglect, and violence through coordinated community efforts.

Youth Engagement

All youth should be empowered to formulate and share their opinions, and be part of decisions that affect them.

Student Success

All youth in Indiana have the right to an equitable, quality education, and to graduate and succeed.

Quality Youth Programs

All youth programs should adhere to quality and best-practice standards to best serve Indiana's young people.

Youth Worker Professional Development

All professionals working with youth should have access to continuing education and professional development with quality standards and credentialing.

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Advocacy Resources

Tools and guidance for engaging in youth policy



Youth Day at the Statehouse

Bringing youth voice directly to legislators



Statehouse Sound-Off

Legislative session updates from MCCOY



Coalitions

Statewide partners advancing shared policy goals



Your Vote. Their Future.

Your one-stop voter guide for everything you need to participate in elections in Indiana



mccoyouth.org/advocacy/advocacy-resources

Our role as advocates.

As a leading intermediary organization, MCCOY connects partners, strengthens youth-serving organizations, elevates youth voice, and advocates for policies that support the well-being of young people and families.

OUR ADVOCACY TEAM

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30+

Years MCCOY has worked to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families across Marion County.



We champion the positive development of youth through community and systems change.

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