

Report finds more than 20,000 children without a stable home in Michigan

## Michigan Radio | By Briana Rice

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An estimated 22,444 high school youth didn't have a stable place to live across the state of Michigan in 2019.

That's according to a report released this week by the University of Michigan's Poverty Solutions Initiative.

The report found that high school-aged youth who are homeless report higher rates of attempted suicide, prescription drug misuse, pregnancy and forced sex, compared to their peers with permanent homes.

The report also found that a majority of the state's youths who don't have permanent housing are not living in homeless shelters, but instead are couch surfing at friends and strangers homes or staying in cars and living outdoors.

Jennifer Erb-Downward is one of the authors of the report. She said it found that many more students than previously thought are experiencing homelessness.

"Bouncing back and forth between living in a tent one night, maybe living on a street one night, in a car, in somebody's house. These locations are very unstable and move frequently and that really has an impact on a youth's health and wellbeing and their education," she said.

Erb-Downward said homelessness disproportionately affects people of color and transgender youth.

Bobby Dorigo Jones, vice president of Michigan's Children, an advocacy organization, said the study's findings show Michigan needs more homeless shelters and services for teens.

"We have 19 counties in our state that do not have a contracted runaway homeless youth service provider," he said.

The report also called for expanding shelters across the state.

It also called for amending Michigan's state runaway laws to align with federal guidelines. Federal law allows youths to consent to receiving shelter services.

Michigan requires a parent to provide that consent, the report's authors said.