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**How Many Children are Homeless in Westchester?
New Interactive Dashboard from
Westchester Children’s Association Unearths the Story Behind the Numbers**

Breaking down the data by school district, age, race, and more, the Dashboard offers important insight into the number of homeless children in Westchester and the barriers that may prevent them from receiving county services to overcome homelessness.

WHITE PLAINS, NY (September 29, 2021) The Westchester Children’s Association (WCA) has launched an important new Dashboard — [Westchester County Child and Youth Homelessness Dashboard \(WCCYHD\)](#) — that brings to light key data on the scope and scale of children and youth across Westchester who are experiencing homelessness. The interactive online database available on the WCA website, presents homelessness data for public school children broken down by school district, race, housing situation, and age and shows the percentages of Westchester children and families receiving county support services.

The intuitive and easy-to-use Dashboard was developed under the guidance of Limarie Cabrera, WCA Director of Data, Operations, and Finance, in collaboration with other staff members and with support from partners in the WCA Child and Youth Homelessness Workgroup, the Westchester County Department of Social Services (DSS), and the Westchester Continuum of Care Partnership to End Homelessness. It is an important new tool for disseminating accurate statistics, highlighting the demographic profiles, and showing geographic distribution of these children in the Westchester County. This Dashboard has the power to answer questions with information that was previously difficult to find while at the same time raising questions about different interpretations and applications of homelessness criteria among districts, government entities and organizations.

Although Westchester is considered an affluent county, thousands of resident children and youth experience homelessness every year and too many of them cannot access the support services they need. Being homeless can have significant negative consequences for children including developmental delays, learning and educational challenges, as well as risk to their physical, mental, and emotional health. Children and youth experiencing homelessness live in complex, unstable, and frequently changing situations. Many live in doubled or tripled-up housing sometimes with people they know but often with strangers.

One major issue is that agencies use different criteria or definitions of “homelessness” to identify children in need resulting in too many slipping through the cracks.

“Westchester cannot fully meet the needs of its homeless children and youth without capturing an accurate count of this population,” explains Allison Lake, WCA executive director. “We wanted to develop a tool that would clearly tell the story of the inequities through data and visualization and give parents, school districts, elected officials, and other interested stakeholders an easy way to access and

understand this important information,” Lake says. She added that the totals and averages often quoted around children and homelessness frequently hide the full story, and evictions as a result of the pandemic will only make the numbers worse.

The Dashboard helps to illuminate that story by providing data to illustrate several key points:

- **Black and Brown children are much more likely to experience homelessness and housing instability compared to their White and Asian counterparts.** In the 2019-20 school year, Black and Hispanic public-school students represented 92% of those experiencing homelessness in Westchester, even though they only represented 48% of the public-school population during the same time period.
- **The Economically Disadvantaged Rate, a poverty measure used by the NYS Educational Department, is not a reliable predictor of the homelessness rate for a school district.** For example, in the school year 2019-20, Mount Vernon reported 68% of their students as economically disadvantaged and 12% of their students as homeless. In comparison, Yonkers reported 75% of their children as economically disadvantaged and 2% of their children as homeless.
- **A large proportion of homeless youth in Westchester do not receive adequate support or preventative homelessness services.** According to the NYS Education Department, 2,357 students were experiencing homelessness in 2019-20. However, because of different definitions of homelessness, only 608 of those children were receiving county services to help them transition out of homelessness (about 26%). That means that 3 out of 4 homeless children were not receiving services to help them find permanent housing.

WCA also wants the Dashboard to serve as a resource for community members who are affected by homelessness or want to help. Equipped with accurate data, they should “feel confident to speak up at town hall meetings and be encouraged to ask about accessing services they might need through a school system,” notes Lake. School districts can use the data to see how they can improve the way they identify children who are experiencing homelessness or households with housing instability to better budget for and provide the services needed. WCA further digests the information through a multi-media campaign on their [blog](#), emails, [video](#), and social media to help those who want to help interpret the Dashboard.

“This Dashboard gives a visual picture of students that might actually be hidden in the numbers,” Lake says. “It’s an important part of the story and should open up a dialogue to get at the real numbers and ensure that all children are getting the services they need if they are economically disadvantaged and/or homeless.”

About Westchester Children’s Association: Westchester Children’s Association (WCA) is a multi-issue, child advocacy nonprofit that works to ensure that every child in Westchester is healthy, safe, and prepared for life’s challenges. Since 1914, WCA has been the leading independent voice for Westchester’s children by identifying their needs, making those needs known to the public, and ensuring those needs are met through advocacy and mobilization efforts.

Find out more at www.wca4kids.org/homelessdashboard or follow @WCA4kids with #WCAchildhomelessness

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