Thrive From the Start

Support Babies. Solve Homelessness. Together.

Supporting Infants and Toddlers Experiencing Homelessness: a bipartisan Congressional Briefing hosted in conjunction with the Congressional Pre-K and Child Care Caucus

Partner Amplification Kit

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Media Statement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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More Than Half a Million Babies and Toddlers Experience Homelessness. Leaders Gather on Capitol Hill to Spotlight Solutions

WASHINGTON, D.C. – More than half a million infants and toddlers experienced homelessness in the United States during the 2023–2024 program year, and most of it went unseen. New national data estimate that 513,539 children from birth through age three were affected, roughly one in every 29 infants and toddlers.

Today, parents, service providers, researchers and national advocates gathered on Capitol Hill for a bipartisan congressional briefing on what homelessness means for babies and their families, and how policymakers and systems can help families find and keep stable housing.

This Thrive From the Start briefing, hosted in conjunction with the bipartisan Congressional Pre-K and Child Care Caucus, brought together leaders in early childhood, housing, homelessness and health.

Homelessness among families with babies often doesn't look the way people expect. Families may be staying in shelters or motels, living in cars or other unsafe places, or doubling up with other people after losing their housing or facing financial hardship.

The effects can last. Homelessness in infancy and toddlerhood is linked to poorer health and developmental delays, including in language, literacy and social-emotional skills.

Few families get the help they need. Fewer than one in ten infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness were enrolled in Early Head Start, a home visiting program or an early childhood program run by a local educational agency, according to a new national report from SchoolHouse Connection and Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan.

Panelists from Indiana, Oregon and Georgia shared their own experiences and the work their organizations do directly with families, including:

"Family homelessness isn't just a housing issue. For babies and the youngest children, even short periods of housing instability can affect healthy development, learning, stress levels, and long-term outcomes. The families we serve aren't just looking for shelter. They're trying to protect their children's futures." *Elise Laubach, Executive Director, Family Promise of Tualatin Valley, Oregon*.

"Our work has taught us that families who experience homelessness don't need rescuing. What they need is support, connections to opportunity, and a real chance for them and their children to thrive." *Tyese Lawyer, President and CEO, Our House, Atlanta, Georgia*.

"With the support of services that were available, I was able to go from being a new mom trying to survive homelessness to now becoming a Habitat for Humanity homeowner… ….I want you to know that's what's possible for families who receive the support." Abbie Bennett, Parent Ambassador, Changent, Indiana.

The Thrive From the Start policy agenda calls on policymakers at every level to take a more coordinated approach: expanding access to shelter and affordable housing, connecting families with early childhood programs and support services, linking health care and housing services, and improving the collection and sharing of data on infant and toddler homelessness.

The briefing was supported by Changent, Corporation for Supportive Housing, Family Promise, the National Collaborative for Infants & Toddlers, National Network for Youth, People Serving People, Prevent Child Abuse America and SchoolHouse Connection.

Through Thrive From the Start, organizations across the country are working to raise awareness of infant and toddler homelessness and to build a more coordinated approach across the systems families rely on.

Homelessness among babies and toddlers is widespread, but it isn't inevitable. Policymakers can help by connecting families with support earlier and building systems that work together, so more babies get the stable start they deserve.

About Thrive From the Start

Thrive From the Start is a cross-sector national network of leading organizations across early childhood, housing, and homelessness systems dedicated to ensuring all expectant parents, infants, toddlers, and their families have the resources and opportunities to thrive.

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Key message

More than half a million infants and toddlers experienced homelessness in 2023–2024, roughly 1 in 29 children from birth through age three. Yet fewer than 1 in 10 were enrolled in Early Head Start, home visiting or local educational agency early childhood programs.

Our shared message: Every baby deserves a safe, stable place to grow. We are calling on policymakers at every level to take a more coordinated approach: expanding access to shelter and affordable housing, connecting families with early childhood programs and support services, linking health care and housing services, and improving how data on infant and toddler homelessness is collected and shared.

3 facts you can use

- An estimated **513,539 infants and toddlers experienced homelessness** in 2023–2024, about 1 in 29 children birth through age three.
- **Fewer than 1 in 10** infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness were enrolled in Early Head Start, home visiting or a local educational agency early childhood program.
- Homelessness isn't always visible. Families may be staying temporarily with others, living in motels, shelters or cars, or moving between unstable living situations.

Ready-to-use social posts

Option 1: Lead with the number

More than **half a million babies and toddlers** experienced homelessness in the U.S. in 2023–2024.

That should stop us in our tracks.

Today, leaders gathered on Capitol Hill to shine a light on this often-hidden crisis and discuss how housing, early childhood, health and homelessness systems can work together to help families find stability and thrive.

Learn more: Thrive From the Start
#ThriveFromTheStart #InfantToddlerHomelessness

Option 2: Lead with the human story

When we picture homelessness, we don't always picture a baby.

But an estimated **513,539 infants and toddlers experienced homelessness in 2023–2024**.

Today's bipartisan congressional briefing brought together parents, providers and national leaders around a simple idea: every baby deserves a safe, stable place to grow.

Together, we can build better-connected systems that help families get the support they need, when they need it.

Learn more about Thrive From the Start.

Option 3: Solution-forward

Housing. Early childhood. Health care. Homelessness services.

Families shouldn't have to navigate these systems alone.

Following today's congressional briefing on infant and toddler homelessness, we're joining partners across the country in calling on policymakers to strengthen the connections across the systems families depend on.

Because when families get support earlier, more babies can have the safe, stable start they deserve.

Learn more about Thrive From the Start.

LinkedIn post

Homelessness among babies and toddlers is more common, and less visible, than many of us realize.

An estimated 513,539 children from birth through age three experienced homelessness in 2023–2024.

Today, parents, providers and national leaders came together on Capitol Hill for a bipartisan congressional briefing to put this often-hidden issue in the spotlight.

The conversation reinforced something important: no single program or system can solve infant and toddler homelessness alone.

Housing, homelessness, early childhood and health systems all touch the lives of families with young children. When those systems work together, we have a better chance of reaching families sooner, preventing homelessness when possible and helping children thrive.

We're proud to be part of the growing Thrive From the Start movement, and we're calling on policymakers to expand access to housing, connect families with early childhood and health supports, and improve data on infant and toddler homelessness.

Learn more about Thrive From the Start.

Newsletter blurb

A hidden crisis for America's youngest children

More than half a million infants and toddlers experienced homelessness in 2023–2024, yet fewer than one in ten were enrolled in key early childhood programs that can connect families with important supports. Read the full report.

On November 18th, parents, providers and national leaders came together on Capitol Hill for a bipartisan congressional briefing focused on making infant and toddler homelessness more visible and advancing solutions. Through Thrive From the Start, organizations across housing, homelessness, early childhood, health and child welfare are working together to help families find stability and give every baby the opportunity to thrive.

Learn more about Thrive From the Start

Talking points for partners

1. **Babies are experiencing homelessness in every kind of community.** More than half a million infants and toddlers experienced homelessness in 2023–2024.
2. **Much of this homelessness is hidden.** A family doesn't have to be sleeping on the street to experience homelessness. Families may be doubled up with others, moving between temporary places, staying in motels or shelters, or living in cars.
3. **The earliest years matter.** Homelessness during infancy and toddlerhood can affect children's health, development and learning.
4. **Families shouldn't have to navigate disconnected systems on their own.** Housing, early childhood, health and homelessness systems all have a role to play.
5. **There are solutions, and policymakers have a role.** The Thrive From the Start policy agenda focuses on expanding access to safe, stable housing, connecting families with early childhood and health supports, and improving data so more families are counted and reached. Together, these steps help prevent homelessness when possible and keep families from having to piece together help on their own.

Suggested call to action

Help make infant and toddler homelessness visible. Share the new data, urge your elected officials to support better-connected systems for families, and learn more at Thrive From the Start.