

Affordable Housing NOW!

Housing and Children's Education

Children deserve the opportunity to succeed in school and life, which starts with a place to call home. Right now, many hardworking families are unable to afford rents and are being forced to move their children from school to school. The effects of relocating a child multiple times during their education can range from a loss of social ties to dropping out of school. For some families, the lack of affordable housing they can afford can lead to homelessness, a nearly impossible environment to gain the education necessary to live full and productive lives. This information sheet highlights some of the problems that families with children face because of the inadequate supply of housing they can afford.

Oregon's housing market has created instability for Oregon's children.

- Nearly 17% of children in Oregon live in poverty, up 22% since 2000.ⁱ
- Nearly half of the students in Multnomah County schools were eligible for free or reduced lunches in 2006-07, up by nearly a third since 2000.ⁱⁱ
- 15,517 homeless children attended public school in Oregon districts during the 2006-07 school year. Most kids doubled-up and stayed with family members or stayed in shelters, but many were out on the streets. Portland School District 1J has the highest homeless student count in Oregon at 1,513 students. (3.3% of total enrollment)ⁱⁱⁱ

Higher school-mobility rates affect the entire system, and cause the most harm to children whose families have low incomes.

- School Mobility is measured by the percentage of students transferred in and out of a school in any given year. 23% of Oregon's students changed schools at least once during the 2005-06 school year.^{iv}
- Mobility rates disrupt classroom dynamics and the sequence of lesson plans, affecting all the students in the classroom and stretching staff resources. Students who live in poverty are more likely to be affected since they have fewer housing and education choices.^v

Housing instability can have a direct impact on a child's education. When a family moves, it often means that school-aged children will have to change schools, disrupting their education.

- Families living in poverty were twice as likely to make a move than higher income families, attributable to a search for an affordable housing alternative.^{vi}
- Student mobility as a result of family poverty results in poor student achievement, increased high school drop out rates, and ongoing behavioral problems.^{vii}
- In 2006, *The Journal of Education Research* cited "high student mobility" and "inadequate housing" as two of the top reasons for low academic performance.^{viii}

Students who move often have lower attendance rates, which can have a negative effect on school achievement.

- Students who are highly mobile during the school year can fall four to six months behind their stable peers.^{ix}
- 41% of highly mobile students are low achievers, compared with 26% of stable students.^x
- Children who change schools more than three times before eighth grade are at least four times more likely to drop out of school.^{xi}
- Research suggests stability may be more important in primary grades. Successive school changes result in a cumulative academic lag.^{xii}
- Three-quarters of homeless children perform below grade level in reading, and more than half perform below grade level in math.^{xiii} In one study, average reading scores

for students who moved three or more times were half those of students who did not move.^{xiv}

Changing schools unravels social networks and other support systems for children and families.

- Moving often damages, or completely severs, important social ties that are useful for cognitive and social development.^{xv}
- Because academic records are not always available, children who move are at risk of inappropriate placement in a new school—placement in programs for the gifted and talented or in remedial classes when neither is appropriate.^{xvi}
- Parents and guardians are often less able to participate in their child's education after a move. It takes time for parents to adjust to the new living situation, become familiar with their child's new teacher, and learn about homework expectations. Parents may also have more immediate concerns, such as finding a job.^{xvii}

Changing schools frequently can have an impact on a child's social and emotional behavior.

- Children that have attended two or more schools before the age of nine, or three or more schools between the ages of 9 and 14, are reported to have a higher score on the Behavior Problem Index than those children that are more stable.^{xviii}
- Some studies have found that mobile students have demonstrated poor adjustment and were suspended more often, further reducing their time for learning.^{xix}
- A strong relationship exists between student mobility and the relative strength of social support networks, such as family, church, other relatives, neighbors, friends, or outside agencies.^{xx}

**How can I get more information or get involved to make a difference?
For more information, please contact Julie Massa at (503) 335-9884 or
Julie@cdnportland.org or go to www.cdnportland.org/ahn**

ⁱ Children First for Oregon, October 2007, "Report Card 2007, The Status of Children in Oregon," p 2.

ⁱⁱ Oregon Department of Education, "Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch," 2006-07.

ⁱⁱⁱ Oregon Department of Education, "Statewide Report Card," 2007, p 87.

^{iv} Children First for Oregon, "County Data Book, Multnomah County" 2006, p 1.

^v Hanushek, Eric A., "Schooling in the Mobile," May 2002.

^{vi} National Center for Children In Poverty, "Low Income Children in the United States," September 2007, p.4.

^{vii} Larson, Katherine A., and Rumberger, Russell W., "Student Mobility and the Increased Risk of High School Drop Out" *American Journal of Education*, 107(1), 1998, p 3.

^{viii} The Journal of Education Research, "Relationship Between Mobility and Student Performance and Behavior," Jan/Feb 2006, p1.

^{ix} Varlas, Laura, "Slowing the Revolving Door: Schools Reach Out to Mobile Families," in the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's Education Update, Vol. 44, No. 7, November, 2002.

^x North Central Regional Education Laboratory, "Student Mobility's Effect on Academic Achievement," 2007

^{xi} Ibid

^{xii} Ibid

^{xiii} Family Housing Fund, "Children Pay the Price for Homelessness", January, 2005. p 3.

^{xiv} Family Housing Fund, "Kids Mobility Project Report," 2001.

^{xv} North Central Regional Education Laboratory, "Student Mobility's Effect on Academic Achievement," 2007

^{xvi} Ibid

^{xvii} Varlas, Laura, "Slowing the Revolving Door: Schools Reach Out to Mobile Families,"

^{xviii} Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, "Frequent School Changes Tied to Behavior Problem," May 4, 2003.

^{xix} North Central Regional Education Laboratory, "Student Mobility's Effect on Academic Achievement," 2007

^{xx} North Central Regional Education Laboratory, "Student Mobility – the Statistics", Fitch, 1994.