

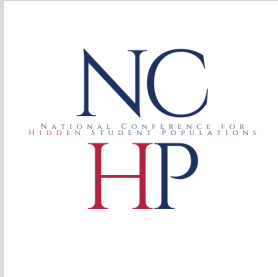
The Scholar-Practitioner

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A publication of R is for Thursday

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National Conference for Engaged Scholarship on Hidden Student Populations

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Current Hidden College Student Populations

May include those who have foster care or justice-involved experiences, who are survivors of sexual violence, who are recovering drug or alcohol addicts, who face housing insecurity, or who are considered Third

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The Scholar-Practitioner is a monthly publication of invited research summaries that target the research-to-practice gap for U.S. scholar and practitioner advocates for college students with experiences in foster care and other hidden college student populations.

This publication reinforces the work of the **National Conference for Engaged Scholarship on Hidden Student Populations (NCHP)** by providing a space to share research applications for practice. NCHP was the first research conference dedicated to this multidisciplinary area of study. The NCHP 4th conference will be held in 2024.

Accessibility Barriers for Students with Disabilities Navigating Housing Insecurity

Popplewell, P., Good, S.A., & Mahoney, M. (2022). [Accessibility Barriers for Students with Disabilities Navigating Housing Insecurity](#). California Homeless Youth Project.

Research Summary

Students who find themselves navigating homelessness and disability face compounding obstacles in accessing services, affordable housing, income stability, job equity, and higher education. To learn from those with lived expertise, the [California Homeless Youth Project](#) hosted virtual surveys, focus groups, and interviews with a total of 124 California students with disabilities who had experienced housing insecurity. Student responses indicated barriers to food security, housing, employment, safety, and financial security.

Students with disabilities noted education challenges in application processes, obtaining accommodations, lack of diverse staff, limited provider capacity, and discrimination. Barriers were present in lack of awareness of campus resources, disability documentation requirements, insufficient accommodations, and negative peer and faculty reactions. More than half of the participants were unaware of the documentation needed for receiving disability-related accommodations, while almost 40% of participants were unsure of where to obtain a diagnosis or off-campus accommodations.

In addition to barriers related to education, students with disabilities facing housing instability emphasized the difficulty in accessing affordable housing. Student housing is available for a percentage of enrolled students with limited emergency housing opportunities for those navigating homelessness. On average, California has only enough dedicated housing for one out of every seven youth experiencing homelessness (California Homeless Youth Project, 2022), with no available data as to the percentage that is accessible. The average rent for a studio apartment in California is \$1,205 a month, with rent in San Francisco reaching over \$2,100 a month (Housing and Urban Development, 2022), while the maximum Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payment is only \$1,040.21 a month (World Institute on Disability, n.d.). SSI and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) exist for students with disabilities; however, it can take from three months to over two years for a final determination, with only a 20% rate of initial approval and a 2% rate of approval by reconsideration or appeal (Social Security Administration Office of Retirement and Disability, 2018).

Financial security is vital for ensuring quality of life. While California's minimum wage is \$15 an hour, employees with disabilities can be paid less than \$2 an hour under the subminimum wage umbrella. Over 70% of participants made equal to or less than \$10 per hour and indicated needing reasonable accommodations.

Almost 80% of participants required public transportation to access one or more essential services (such as housing, meals, disability-related resources, school, or work). However, service access and delivery can have unintentional programmatic barriers; physical, hearing, speaking, reading, writing, and/or comprehension accessibility are often not fully considered.

The following recommendations are amplified by students, providers, and community voices. They emphasize the intersectional solutions required to address the unmet basic needs of students with disabilities. As the COVID-19 pandemic had a substantial effect on the ability to fully research this intersection, these solutions must be guided by further work to highlight the lack of accessibility, equity, and support for students with disabilities facing housing insecurity. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, this is a pivotal time to educate one another and work together to strategically dismantle barriers.

Education

- Establish and properly resource liaisons to assist in the transition from K-12 to higher education.
- Partner and compensate students with disabilities to train staff to develop appropriate accommodations.
- Ensure students know about disability services.
- Create alternatives to medical documentation requirements.
- Train professors on disabilities and accommodations.

- Ensure accommodations are obtainable through clearly defined instructions.
- Make all classes physically accessible through ADA and offer ongoing hybrid online courses.
- Partner with community organizations and use funding to support accessible low-income student housing.
- Establish and maintain accessible internships that pay a living wage.

Employment

- Implement reasonable accommodations for employees to access their workspace.
- Create flexible work schedules to accommodate employees with frequent appointments, fatigue, or schedules dependent on care support workers.
- Foster an inclusive work environment through training programs and mentorship.
- Discontinue subminimum wage pay.

Services and Housing

- Establish affordable and equitable housing options for people with a wide range of impairments.
- Eliminate asset limits for public assistance (Altiraifi, 2020).
- Increase SSI benefits and include home health aide pay.
- Ensure spaces are accessible:
 - Install an entrance ramp, widen entrances, and create accessible parking from public

sidewalks, or public transportation (California Commission on Disability Access [CCDA], 2021).

- Change room layouts for spacing, eliminate high pile/low-density carpet, and use Braille or raised character signage (CCDA, 2021).
- Use accessible locks, exit devices, handles, pulls, latches, and other operable parts on doors (CCDA, 2021).
- Move or widen partitions in public bathrooms (CCDA, 2021).
- Any other measures necessary to make spaces accessible (CCDA, 2021).
- Ensure access to interpreters, TTY (TeleTYpe), TDD (Telecommunications Device for the Deaf), TT (Text Telephone), and/or Video Relay Service for D/deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deafblind individuals (CCDA, 2021).
- Ensure materials are accessible to visually impaired individuals through the utilization of screen reader-friendly pages, raised character signage, and/or Braille (CCDA, 2021). *Measures.*

References

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