

# Does providing flexible transportation options to families in shelter help get their kids to school?

**Partners:** [DC Department of Human Services](#), [DC Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education](#)

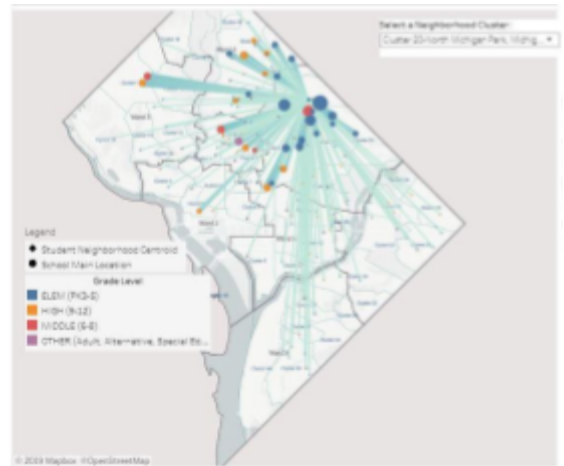
**Timeline:** 2019 - 2020

**Status:** Implementation

**Method:** [Randomized Evaluation](#)

**Links:** [Open Science Framework](#), [Pre-Analysis Plan](#)

Nearly half of students experiencing homelessness in DC miss at least 1 out of every 10 days of school, and transportation is often a major barrier. A new pilot program called Every Ride Counts offers metro and bus passes to families with school-aged children immediately upon entering one of DC's Short-Term Family Housing sites. We are testing whether offering families additional gas and ride-share gift cards improves students' school attendance. The findings will inform decisions on how to best support school attendance for families experiencing homelessness.



This map shows where the children living in one neighborhood in Northeast DC have to travel to go their schools. (Credit: Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education)

## Why is this issue important in DC?

Most children in DC attend a school other than their neighborhood school. To get there, students can ride public transit for free using the District's Kids Ride Free program. Planning transportation and taking a new route to school can be challenging, especially for families experiencing the added stress and logistical challenges of homelessness.

## What are we doing?

In March 2019, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) and the Department of Human Services (DHS) launched a new pilot to begin tackling this issue, called Every Ride Counts. The pilot is testing the impacts of flexible transportation resources on school attendance while families are staying in one of DC's new neighborhood-based, Short-term Family Housing sites.

Through the pilot, case managers offer all families with school-aged children two weeks of metro and bus passes. Half of the families are randomly assigned to also receive their choice of gas or ride-share gift cards. We are measuring the impact of the gift cards on school attendance during the families' first two weeks at the Short-term Family Housing site.

## What have we learned?

We expect to have the results in June 2020.

## What comes next?

As part of the District's efforts to increase attendance for all students, the findings will inform how DME and DHS support students experiencing homelessness to get to school.

## What happened behind the scenes?

Not every family's trip to school is the same. Some trips take 10 minutes, others more than an hour. Some families have four children, others just one. In order to distribute resources equitably, The Lab created a web application to estimate the cost for families to get to school for two weeks. This application calculated the value of their gas and ride-share gift cards in real-time as they entered the program. This means that if a family's trip to school takes an hour, they receive more than a family whose trip takes 10 minutes.