

What You Need to Know...



Children Without Homes

When we think about people who are experiencing homelessness, we usually think about adults. The fact is millions of children experience homelessness every year. These children sleep in cars, shelters and abandoned buildings. They relocate constantly, which results in their being pulled out of school and away from friends. Every child deserves to live and grow in a safe, secure environment. Unfortunately, America has let these children down.

Facts About Families and Children Who Are Homeless

- Families are now the fastest growing segment of the homeless population and account for almost 40 percent of the nation's homeless. On any given night, 1.2 million children are homeless.
- Most children become homeless because their mothers and fathers are unable to find affordable housing. Traumatic events such as unemployment, illness, accidents, or violence and abuse further limit their ability to secure decent housing.
- The average homeless family is composed of a young, single mother and two children under the age of six.
- Children between the ages of six and 17 years old who are homeless struggle with high rates of mental health problems.
 - Nearly one in three children who are homeless have at least one major mental disorder that interferes with daily activities compared to nearly one in five school-age children who are not homeless.
 - Almost half of children who are homeless have anxiety, depression or withdrawal compared to less than one in five other school-age children.
 - And more than one in three children who are homeless manifest delinquent and aggressive behavior compared to less than one in five other school-age children.
- Homeless children are hungry more than twice as often as other children, and two-thirds worry that they won't have enough to eat.
- Homeless children are more often in fair or poor health, are four times more likely to have asthma, and are four times more likely to have a low birth weight and need special care right after birth compared to children who are not homeless.
- Unhealthy living conditions can weaken a child's resistance to disease. Communal conditions of shelter life – including overcrowding and shared food preparation – increase the risk of disease and infection.
- Children who grow up on the streets are likely to repeat the lifestyle with their own children.

How Can We Help?

Americans must ensure that homelessness does not become a family tradition. Use the facts and statistics provided above to advocate for community-based treatment and support services for families, which enable them to find homes, receive appropriate physical and mental health treatment, and rebuild their lives in the community. Inform your local and state governments that if these services are not funded and successfully implemented, the social and economical costs to society will have a devastating impact on everyone's future.

For More Information

For a free and confidential mental health screening, go on-line to www.mhacolorado.org.

National Alliance To End Homelessness www.endhomelessness.org

National Coalition for the Homeless www.nationalhomeless.org.

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