

Homeless children in america

[Sociology](#), [Poverty](#)



Justin Siersma A29851780 SW 200 - 4/21/2005 Homeless Children in America To be homeless is to not have a home or a permanent place of residence. Nationwide, there is estimated to be 3.5 million people that are homeless, and roughly 1.35 million of them are children. It is shown that homeless rates, which are the number of sheltered beds in a city divided by the city's population, have tripled since the 1980's (National Coalition for Homeless, 2002). Worldwide, it is estimated that 100 million children live and work on the streets. Homeless children are more at risk than anyone else, and are among the fastest growing age groups of homelessness. Single women with children represent the fastest growing group of homeless, accounting for about 40% of the people that are becoming homeless today. Children that are homeless can become this way for a variety of reasons. Youth can be on their own, with no permanent residence or even usual place to sleep. They could have also been separated from their own homeless parents and placed in foster care or living with some of their relatives. A child could be part of a family that becomes homeless, or even belong to a single parent. The decline in low cost housing, which has been declining over the last 20 years, could be to blame for the amount of people on the streets. With the explosion of growth in the suburbs, these cities have created local governments that make it easy to keep low income housing out of their communities. Ideas such as redlining and predatory lending can lead to low income families not receiving the needed loans to move into housing, which can force them into the streets. The programs to help the poor and homeless are few and far between. There are five general programs that assist those who are not able to provide for certain things, such as food, shelter and care

for the children. These programs are Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the Food Stamps programs, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Unemployment Compensation, and General Assistance. These programs are generally harder to get into than what most people think. People must meet strict requirements to be able to receive money from the federal government. For example, a household qualifies for the expedited service of the Food Stamp program, a family must have less than \$150 in gross monthly income, be a migrant or seasonal farm worker with resources of \$100 or less, and all members of the household must be homeless (Baumohl, 1996). Homeless children are up to three times more susceptible to health problems than those of normal children. Acute disorders, such as lice infestations, to major health risks such as nutritional deficiencies and upper respiratory infections are five to ten times more likely to develop while being a homeless child. When it comes to homeless youth, an amazing 14% of girls aged 13 to 15 were pregnant since being homeless (Kryder-Coe, 1991). Sexually transmitted diseases are also seven to eight times more likely to be contracted by homeless youth than normal youths. Alcohol and substance abuse, as well as severe psychotic disorders, are somewhat common in homeless children, but almost nonexistent among normal children. Child Welfare Services (CWS) major focus is on the safety and well being of a homeless child. Their goal is to help courts expedite permanent placement for children through programs such as the Court Improvement Program and the Foster Care Review Board Program. They also deal with cases involving abused and neglected children, and have the authority to take children away from their parents if either of these two are proven. For many children, the

lack of adequate housing is a major factor in their entry into the public child welfare system. Social work has a strong relationship with this problem of homeless children and the Child Welfare Services. CWS directly deals with homeless children, helping them stay in their own safe home if it is determined to be so, or helping place them in a relative's home or even foster care. Many social work organizations are geared to help children not only nationally, but worldwide as well. Amnesty International protects the rights and well being of children that may be targeted simply because they are dependent and vulnerable. The United Nations Children's Fund is an organization dedicated to giving assistance in the development of permanent child health, homeless and welfare services, particularly to those children in developing countries. Almost 60% of social work careers are involved in work as child, family or school social workers. This means that a great majority of those who get involved in the social work field will deal with the effects of child homelessness and have a first hand view of how to try to deal with the situation. Social work is doing a great deal of work to try to address the issue of homeless children. In the state of Michigan in 2002, 77% of children in the foster care system were placed into adoption homes, which freed them of the homelessness. Social workers are also engaged in a wide variety of community development programs and activities to help promote awareness among the general public about this problem of child homelessness. I believe that there are many things that can be done to address this problem of child homelessness. For one, I believe that the welfare system is widely abused by many people around the country. With even stricter conditions to receive this funding, the amount of people

enrolled in the program could drop significantly. People refuse to get jobs once they are on welfare, which hurts their chances even more of saving up money to be able to buy or rent housing, which could force them eventually out onto the streets. Affordable housing is another issue that needs to be addressed quickly to alleviate the problem of homelessness. Low income housing is generally associated with crime and other undesirable characteristics, which force other communities to shun these types of housing proposals. I agree with the concept that the CWS is now implementing into their system, by not removing a child from their own household unless absolutely deemed necessary. By giving the child a chance to live in their own house and not be placed into foster care so quickly gives the child a future that would otherwise not be so great.

Bibliography

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