

Homelessness



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It has been estimated that about one percent of Americans “some two to three million people in a given year experience an episode of homelessness that puts them in contact with a homeless assistance provider (Caton, Dominguez, Schanzer, Hasin, 2005). Homelessness became a prominent issue in the 1980’s. Although it is impossible to know exactly how many people are without shelter for one or more nights, it is estimated that between 1.3 to 2 million people were homeless in the United States at the end of the 1980’s (Sitkoff, 2000).

This paper will discuss the types of people who may be homeless their predicaments for being homeless and health care within the homeless. Many view homeless as a lifestyle with substance abusers, and mentally ill individuals, when in fact these are just a portion of the homeless.

Homelessness is the condition and social category of people who don’t have a regular house or dwelling because they can’t afford, pay for, or are otherwise unable to maintain regular, safe and adequate housing (Case, 2001). Single mothers with children and people with minimal job skills make up nearly fifty percent of the homeless population.

Battered women who live in poverty are often forced to choose between abusive relationships and homelessness. In a 1998 government study it showed that twenty two percent of homeless were single mothers who left their previous residence because of domestic issues (Hersberger, 2005).

Another portion of the homeless would be both men and women who have recently been released from jails or prisons that have nowhere else to go or no one to turn to. The likelihood of someone becoming homeless depends on circumstances that include both societal based causes and personal

problems. People become homeless for many different reasons. The most proximate cause of homelessness in America is poverty (Hersberger, 2005).

In many cases individuals can resolve one life crises, but homeless have most often been dealt multiple crises, including various combinations of mental health issues, substance abuse , domestic violence, loss of a job, loss of loved ones , or loss of one??™s home (Hersberger, 2005). One cause to a society based condition is the individual??™s circumstance. That my include minimum wage employment, lack of public assistance services and lack of mental health services (Science Letter, 2005).

Information needs are often tied to the reasons that one may become a homeless statistic. Untreated mental illness and disability can cause individuals to become paranoid, anxious, or depressed making it difficult or impossible to maintain job employment, pay bills, or keep supportive social relationships. Substance abuse can drain financial resources, cause job or housing loss, and erode social relationships. Substance abuse is also quite prevalent in the homeless population (Caton, Dominguez, Schanzer, Hasin, 2005).

Health care for the homeless is a major public health challenge.

Homelessness severely impacts health and well being. Being homeless can lead to poor health. Limited access to health care can make it worse.

The rates of acute health problems are extremely high among people experiencing homelessness (Sitkoff, 2007). Advocates for the homeless point out that the disruption in the lives of children living in shelters can lead to health problems such as respiratory and intestinal infections along with

psychological trauma and poor nutrition. Their overall health status is far worse than that of children in homes (Unknown author, 2007). Children without a home have higher rates of asthma, ear infections, stomach problems and speech problems (Case, 2001).

Increased rates of infectious diseases as well as chronic medical conditions have been reported, ranging from community acquired pneumonia, tuberculosis and HIV, cardiovascular disease and chronic obstructive lung disease (Caton et. al). For some, cancer risk factors prevalence rates are higher in the homeless than in the general population including smoking and alcoholism. Nearly forty percent of homeless individuals are reported to have some type of chronic health problems (Caton et. al). There are more homeless people in the United States than there are resources available to help them.

Increasingly, homelessness affects not only the very poor but also working and middle class Americans. Being homeless can happen for any given reason to anyone.