

# Homelessness and substance abuse



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It has been long suggested that homelessness and substance abuse are in some way connected in a lot of cases. While this point has not been debated, the issue has become which has occurred first, the substance abuse or the homelessness. Has the loss of a home drove people to abuse substances or have people's illicit substance abuse led to misappropriation of funds and ultimately foreclosure and homelessness. The debate has raged on about whether the substance abuse is a cause for homelessness or a consequence of homelessness. Is the substance abuse a risk factor or does the homelessness induce drug use. Recent studies have been conducted in various parts of the world to try and first determine what is caused first the substance abuse or the homelessness and ways to stop the growing trend. In an article by Guy Johnson and Chris Chamberlain of RMIT University in Victoria, Australia, they conducted a study involving about 4, 300 people in Australia. They set out to try and find which way the relationship flowed either from homelessness to substance abuse or from substance abuse to homelessness. They found that 43% of the sample had substance abuse problems. Of the 43%, one third or 15% of the 43% has substance abuse problems before they were homeless for the very first time. Their study also showed that in most of those cases the substance abuse was not the cause of the homelessness, there were other factors that resulted in them becoming homeless such as job loss, divorce, change in other family structures and other factors. The other two thirds, developed the substance abuse after they became homeless. Their research suggested that many researchers have focused on substance abuse as an adaptation as opposed to a precursor. They found in the study that people turned to substance abuse for two common reasons. The first being that people begin to take the

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drugs as a way to cope with or somehow escape the harsh, oppressive environments that confronts them. Secondly, people turned to substance abuse because it is widely accepted in the homeless community and has become an accepted social practice. Some even expressed in the study that drug use is commonly a form of initiation into the homeless society and they felt like they had nothing else and just wanted to find a sense of belonging and to fit in and be accepted by the homeless society they begin to use and later abuse substances. The study also showed that substance abuse problems was more prevalent in people that were younger when they first experienced homelessness and homelessness usually lasted for more than 12 months when substance abuse is thrown into the equation. During my experience this summer, I encountered many people who are in the midst of substance abuse issues and are seeking help. Many of these individuals are homeless at this present time and seek shelter in either Detox programs, homeless shelters, or wherever they can get to. While the study shows that most people experience substance abuse after they have become homeless, I have dealt with many people who have become homeless because of their substance abuse. They have not been able to take care of the bills because their habit has consumed their life and consumed their finances. They have lost wives, husbands, and families because their spouses no longer wanted to sit by and witness the self destruction that was taking place. This also helped speed up the process because the loss of an income made it even harder to support a habit and also make sure all of the bills were paid. A lot of these people with the proper help and support staff can be back on the road to recovery in terms of kicking their habit and also getting away from homelessness. This has been an humbling experience because I have the <https://assignbuster.com/homelessness-and-substance-abuse/>

opportunity to understand exactly what it is that some people have to deal with and compete with.