

HOMELESS YOUTH & FAMILIES

Erica Bader

Children of the homeless are truly the hardest to deal with among all the homeless issues in the United States today. Children are often times at the disposal of their elders and their guardians. If that person cannot provide decent housing for them then there is not much that the child can do. Most children cannot go to school if they are homeless. Books, clothing, and having an address are normally all expected and needed for attending school. So what should be done with the youth of the homeless? There have been programs that were started that help cloth and give children an address so that they are allowed to attend school.

There are many different programs and ideas for youth that are homeless, but what is the most helpful and best for those children? What will give them the most structured and secure life? There are many programs out there for the youth of the homeless, but are they truly doing what is needed and in the best interest for those children? There are programs that take the children away from their parents, and that seems counterproductive for many cases. There are programs that work with the family, but these can be more costly and harder to maintain.

The topic of homelessness is very difficult, but adding families and youth into the equation is more dynamic and requires more thought and flexibility. Shelter, food, education, and structure are what most youth need. There should be programs out there to support and help those who are less fortunate. These programs should be flexible and dynamic; what is the best way to go about this?

Cari Simpson

Homeless children should be educated so they do not become homeless adults, but also the general public should be educated about homelessness and how to help. If both of these are accomplished, homelessness would be one step closer to extinction.

If the general public was sufficiently educated in regard to how to successfully encounter a homeless person, homelessness could be better understood and dealt with. Boake Moore's article [How to Help the Homeless](#) states that a simple dialogue can have an impact on a homeless person, "Taking time to talk to a homeless person in a friendly, respectful manner can give them a wonderful sense of civility and dignity. And besides being just neighborly, it gives the person a weapon to fight the isolation, depression and paranoia that many homeless people face," (Moore 1). The public needs to be reached and educated about simple, quick methods that can alter a homeless person's life permanently and positively.

Also, if the public can work together to prevent homeless children from becoming homeless adults, they can help extinguish homelessness on a wider scale. Children learn habits from their parents by modeling their actions, or as the result of some type of abuse that funnels their perspective on life into a winding rollercoaster of declining self confidence and pessimism. The National Center on Family Homelessness produced a statistic that states, "Homeless children are three times as likely as their peers to be developmentally delayed and twice as likely to be learning disabled." An education system specific to these underprivileged and disabled children is a necessity for these homeless children if they are to lead successful lives and contribute to society.

Liberty Stubbs

In 2002, there were 12.1 million children living in poverty ("Why are People Homeless?"). There were 1,862,900 runaway and homeless youths ("Homeless Youths"). These numbers make up a large percent of the homeless population. The issue of homeless youth roaming the streets needs to be addressed, and something must be done. Youth are homeless for a few main reasons. Many youth run away from an unpleasant home environment

where their parents neglect or abuse them and have nowhere to run to. Some homeless youth are homeless because their parents are and they don't have a choice. And others become homeless when they turn eighteen and they are discharged from foster homes. In most cases, if a youth is living on the streets, they are not to blame. It's usually a result of them not having anyone to take care of them or prepare them for life.

When a person grows up on the streets, chances are that person will be homeless as an adult. Most homeless youth have low self esteem and are depressed. They turn to drugs and alcohol and they become involved with the wrong people in search for love and affection. Some will steal, sell drugs, and sell their bodies just so they can survive. There are many risks and challenges they must face.

It's not possible to give every homeless youth a family. That's probably the hardest part for homeless youth because they don't have anyone to love or support them, and that can be emotionally difficult. They also don't grow up with life skills that parents are responsible for teaching their children. What we can do is build homes where we can take homeless children in and provide them with education, food, healthcare, and any therapy they need. There's no reason children should have to live without the necessities of life.

Andrew Daigh

The numbers of homeless families with children are undeniably growing larger each day. In fact, The National Coalition for the Homeless states, "One of the fastest growing segments of the homeless population is families with children." Homeless families need to receive more government attention, especially when there are children involved. The National Coalition for the Homeless also states that, "Homeless families are most commonly headed by single mothers in their late 20s with approximately two children." These are the families that need to be helped and focused on, the homeless mothers who have hit rock bottom and her kids who have no control over their living situation.

The issue that really strikes me when it comes to homeless families is the children who have to live with their parents mistakes. If a teenager's mom suddenly goes homeless that teenager can legally work to help resolve the problem. However, the National Center on Family Homelessness states, that at least half of these homeless children in families are under the age of five. What can a five year old do besides go along for the ride?

The point that I am trying to make is that the children of these homeless families are helpless, and in desperate need. The kids are truly never at fault for their parent's financial problems and that is what we need to realize. America needs to be supportive of these homeless families, whether it is with affordable housing, or just additional funding to feed them and keep them living.

Lindsey Musser

In researching homelessness in the youth many questions have arose. Who are homeless youth compromised of? Why are there homeless youth? What can we do to prevent or decrease the homelessness youth population? These are only a few major questions my research has encompassed. So far, I have discovered that homeless youth that have difficult family situations have an increased risk of becoming pregnant because of the feeling of abandonment. I have learned that throughout the country, the profiles of homeless youth are similar, the lifestyles they live are similar, and the causes of youth homelessness are similar.

A couple key ideas that should be taken under consideration at the Town Hall Meeting session are concentrating on why there are homeless youth and what can be done to help this group of young people. Answering the questions: Why are there homeless youth? And what can we do to help out youth homelessness or maybe how can we prevent it in the future? Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation is a good source to look at for

information and suggestions of why there are homeless youth and could give ideas of how we could take action to prevent it.

The kind of conversation I would like is to help create and participate in at the THM is one where people can give their advice or opinions about the topic. I would also like to hear what other people have to say about the different topics and what their suggestions would be to everyone else.

The main next step/question I plan to propose during THM is: What can we do to help out that might get people interested in helping the homeless youth or take action to prevent the homelessness youth problem.

Genea Serrano

There are thousands and thousands of children displaced from their homes daily. Whether they run away or something happens to their parents, we need to get these children off the streets. I think that orphanages or some sort of group homes are the best place for these children, as long as there isn't abuse in that environment. There are tons of foster homes but I think that foster parents need to be put through a screening process because some foster parents tend to be abusive and neglectful toward these children. I don't think that shelters are where children need to grow up. They might be dysfunctional as they grow older due to what they might have seen at the shelter. How do we get these children off the streets, if they feel like they can't trust anyone?

My goal is to provoke a conversation about how we as a community can help homeless families so that they don't have to raise their children on the streets.

The issues are: are we dealing with children that are being rebellious, are they children with mental illnesses, or are they just children that don't have a home to go to? Either way we need to keep them off the streets. I think the biggest issue is how do we help so many people? Well we physically cant. We can only help so many. How do we know who needs the most help? I don't think that we can really know unless that person is dying on the streets.

Brenna Mooney

Is it right that we are just watching as more and more homeless single mothers are left on the streets, or that more and more youths are ending up homeless on the streets and/or winding up in gangs? I understand that there are those shelters out there specifically meant to help those exact people, but are we spending enough time actually trying to make sure their lives can improve? There are shelters that are specifically meant for women and children, but what about when those children are growing and they are no longer little boys but teenagers? Do we then kick them out? Why is it that there are just mostly women and children shelters? What about the single homeless fathers? Who is supposed to make sure that these things are going to be taken care of?

I think that it is time that we as a whole country take a stand and give up time in our lucky lives and help put roofs over those who cannot do it by themselves. It is time that we stop waiting for "the man" to help, because waiting for the man to help is like waiting for the ice caps to stop melting. It is pointless. We need to be able to provide affordable housing, clothing, and food. If enough people put in the effort to help we as a whole can make that difference. What can we possibly do to stop the homeless youths from getting into drugs, alcohol and gangs? We can open more places like the YMCA. We can make them run completely on donations. I know that something like that could really help those children. So it is time to act, it is time to stop sitting around feeling sorry for them(I know that I have caught myself pitying those less fortunate) and do something.

Beverly Killian

The plight of the homeless is far reaching with many obstacles in the way of minimizing its affects on society. The numbers are increasing daily and without an end in sight. It seems as though the issue is bigger than its solution and without the understanding of even knowing where to begin. The homeless issue has become a skeleton in the closet of our nation, and no one really wants to open the door for fear of not being able close it.

My goal is to give the group the opportunity to discuss and or suggest what could be done to minimize the number of homeless families with children in our city/state or nation.

On any given day, approximately 800,000 people are homeless in the United States, including 200,000 children in homeless families. In a year's time, at least 1.35 million children are homeless, eking out a life in shelters and abandoned cars, ragged, often sick and dirty, panhandling and begging for food... (Morgan)

A productive conversation that opens the door to possible solutions and or suggestions for minimizing the homeless issue among families and children. Then exploring those solutions and suggestions and seeing what could be done to put those solutions and or suggestions into motion.

Other topics would be on prevention methods such as developing a program within the school districts to speak with students about the issues that can lead to homelessness with an emphasis on drugs, alcohol, domestic and familial abuse. This would then create an opportunity to discuss the idea of developing a network that helps those who are in need of assistance and give them the opportunity to get back on their feet as quickly as possible.