

Coalition on Homelessness, San Francisco

Fact Sheet on Family Homelessness

Are the numbers of homeless families going down?

- While some homeless sub-populations have decreased in recent years, the number of persons in families experiencing homelessness has increased.
- Public schools in the United States enroll a record number of homeless children and youth, according to U.S. Department of Education (ED) data released September 22, 2014.
- The 1,258,182 homeless students enrolled by U.S. preschools and K-12 schools in the 2012-2013 school year is an increase of 8 percent from the previous school year. California is up 4% with a total of 258,904 students with no place to call home.
- 81 percent of the children included in the ED data are not recognized as homeless by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), because they are living temporarily in motels or doubled-up housing. As a result, 1,006,899 homeless children are eligible for educational assistance through local schools, but not HUD services including shelter, short-term housing, and assistance with obtaining permanent housing.

How many families and children are homeless and who are they?

- It is estimated nationally that person in family's represent 38% of the homeless population. The January 2013, the San Francisco homeless count found 679 members of intact families, and 1,902 unaccompanied children and youth. Like HUD numbers, these do not include families living temporarily in hotels or doubled up. (*2013 San Francisco Homeless Count and Survey*)
- More than two-thirds (63%) of families responding had been homeless for more than six months. (*2013 San Francisco Homeless Count and Survey*).
- There are currently 2,200 homeless students enrolled in San Francisco Unified School District, this is up from 1,600 in 2009 and 1,232 in 2005. This only includes those school age children who identify themselves as homeless to the district.
- More than 1,600 homeless family members are living in Single Room Occupancy Hotels. This includes more than 800 children living in cramped, substandard housing.
- 32% of families identified as African American, and 28% as white.
- The risk of homelessness is higher among families with children under the age of 6.

What is the Cause of Family Homelessness?

- Since 1976, the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) department's total budget has dropped by more than \$45 billion per year, with the biggest drop occurring between 1980 and 1983 (*National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2001*).
- The average rent in San Francisco for a studio apartment has now reached \$2,200, far exceeding a service sector employee's paycheck (\$10/hour gross or \$1,495 /month net) and more than 3.5 times a monthly public assistance check (\$608 for family of three).

27 Unsub 1000 Sunnydale 2-24
5 teenagers 30 adults

- People who cannot afford market rents turn to subsidized housing for help. In San Francisco, there are 8,000 households on the waitlist for public housing. The waitlist for Section 8 was last open for one month in 2001. The waitlist for public housing closed February 1, 2010.
- In the 2013 SF homeless count, domestic violence was the most frequently cited cause of homelessness among survey respondents living in families (27%). This was followed by job loss (22%).

What about San Francisco’s family shelter system?

- There are three long-term shelters and 3 emergency shelters in San Francisco.
- There is room for approximately 60 families in long-term shelters for adults and families, and even fewer can be housed in the emergency shelters.
- The wait for long term shelters is more then six months, and the maximum stay once you are in are 90 days.

Have Homeless Families Recovered from the Recession?

- Families were hit the most noticeably by the recession in San Francisco. The number of families waiting for shelter more then tripled since the summer of 2007. The waitlist has dropped back down post-recession, but is still very long . Currently, there are over 202 families waiting for shelter in San Francisco and the wait exceeds six months.

What is the Impact of Homelessness on Children?

- Children in families experiencing homelessness have increased incidence of illness and are more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems than children with consistent living accommodations.

How is the Coalition on Homelessness Responding?

The Coalition has been busy organizing homeless people to fight for justice for over twenty-five years. During that time, we have forced the city to respond to this crisis by creating housing, opening new substance abuse treatment programs, transforming the mental health system and creating jobs for homeless people. We have passed numerous pieces of legislation that ensures the human rights of homeless people are protected, and we have successfully beat back policies that would harm the population.

For homeless families, the city must first ensure comprehensive prevention efforts – keep families housed by ensuring right to counsel, back rent, and bridge subsidies to keep families in housing when their income drops. Second we must move families quickly out of homelessness, by investing in permanent housing affordable to them – the very poorest 10% of San Francisco – through building new housing, buying current buildings, fixing up vacant public housing, and creating housing subsidies both short and long term. Third, we must have a decent emergency system that ensures dignity while waiting for housing.

We have established ourselves as a strong force to be reckoned with – a group who does not compromise homeless people’s lives, and never gives up fighting for our rights. Check out our website or call us for ways to join the struggle.

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