

# **Homelessness Awareness Campaign: 2011**

## Exploring the Face of Homelessness – Fact Sheet

According to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2010 annual report to Congress, each night there are approximately 770,000 people in the United States who are homeless. The US Department of Education reports that there are an additional 700,000 children without a place to call home and who go to bed hungry nightly.

41% of those homeless are families and about 1.5 million children were homeless just last year, according to the National Center of Family Homelessness.

In the United States of America, 20-25% of people experiencing homelessness are Veterans. It is estimated that 76,000 Veterans are homeless in the U.S. on any given night.

An estimated 50,000 youth in U.S. are homeless & sleep on the street for six months or more (according to the National Alliance to End Homelessness). "Stand Up For Kids", a National organization to assist homeless youth in the U.S., estimate that "more than 1,400 children between the ages of 10-17 run away every day. They continue: "In almost 22 years that we've been walking the streets and helping America's homeless youth, we never found a kid that wanted to be homeless, or live on the streets".

**Single mothers and children make up the largest group of people who are homeless in rural areas.** According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, (2010), many families are usually headed by a single woman with limited education, are usually young and have high rates of domestic violence and mental illness. **60% of homeless women have experience familial violence some time in their lifetime. Approximately 80% of homeless women have experienced sexual abuse in their lifetime.**

**In our local transitional housing in Sandpoint, children occupy the largest number of bed-nights.** Out of 19,082 bed nights last year served by Bonner County Homeless Task Force, dba, Transitions In Progress Services, 60% of these beds were occupied by **children**.

**Homelessness and hunger are a growing issue in our rural community.** According to the Census Bureau report, the overall poverty rate climbed to 14.3 percent, or 43.6 million people, in its annual report on the economic well-being of

U.S. households. The ranks of the working-age poor climbed to the highest level since the 1960s as the recession threw millions of people out of work last year, **leaving one in seven Americans in poverty.**

**It is estimated by our local food banks and soup kitchens that the increase of food offered has increased by 20%.**

**According to a recent report by CBS-60 Minutes, “7.5 million jobs were lost in our recession, contributing to the rising numbers of people being hungry and homeless for the first time in their lives.** A record number of children are descending into poverty. If this trend continues, it is estimated that children will be the largest generation raised in “hard times” since the Great Depression.

**In our local community, the combined economic down-turn coupled with the high cost of housing, led to increased numbers of families at risk for homelessness.** In our region, the prevalent contributor of homelessness is lack of employment/income and lack of affordable & accessible housing. We, at T.I.P.S. find that under-lying barriers exist for individuals to achieve stability and self-sufficiency. These often hidden challenges include –underdeveloped life-skills, lack of education and poor access to support and intervention around disabling conditions.

**Homelessness in rural communities is often invisible.**

There are far fewer shelters in rural areas than in urban areas; therefore, people experiencing homelessness are less likely to live on the street or in a shelter and more likely to live in a car or camper, tent, abandoned structure, or with relatives in overcrowded or substandard housing. According to the recent “Point In Time Regional Survey”, for people experiencing homelessness, the highest percentage of sheltering occurred in ‘their vehicle’.

Homelessness and hunger prevail in our community with growing numbers. With this reality, is an ever-expanding ‘*waiting list*’ for transitional sheltering each and every day.

**T.I.P.S. estimates that we receive an average of 3-5 phones calls daily, from individuals & families seeking immediate shelter.**

**This is the classmate sitting next to you at school.**

**This is the child in daycare playing with your children.**

**This is the checker at the grocery store.**

**This is the one with a back-pack seeking a way through.**

## **Children & Homelessness Facts**

**“Think of a homeless person. Maybe you are picturing a lone man lying on a park bench.  
Try again.**

**Only this time, picture a sick, frightened, hungry child with no place to call home. As we  
move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this cruel vision is the new face of homelessness.”**

**-Alvin F. Pouissant, M.D. National Advisory Board Chair, National Center on Family Homelessness**

Research indicates that homelessness and residential mobility leads to poor school performance, repeating grades, dropping out, and lower rates of high school graduation. **(National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2010)**

Once homeless, specific events occur that further traumatize or destabilize these children. Homelessness for a child is more than the loss of a home. It disrupts every aspect of life. At a time when children should be developing a sense of safety and unpredictability, dislocation and chaos. **(Bassuk, 2007).**

The realities of homeless children’s circumstance –poverty and traumatic stress –can result in poor mental health outcomes, including high rates of behavioral problems, delayed developmental milestones, emotional dysregulation, attachment disorders and anxiety and depression **(Bassuk et al., 1997. Guarino & Bassuk, 2010; The National Center on Family Homelessness, 1999).**

### **Homelessness Affects Children’s Development Compared to those with homes, homeless children have:**

- **Four times the rate of developmental delays**
- **Two times the rate of learning disabilities**
- **Three times the rate of emotional and behavioral problems**



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