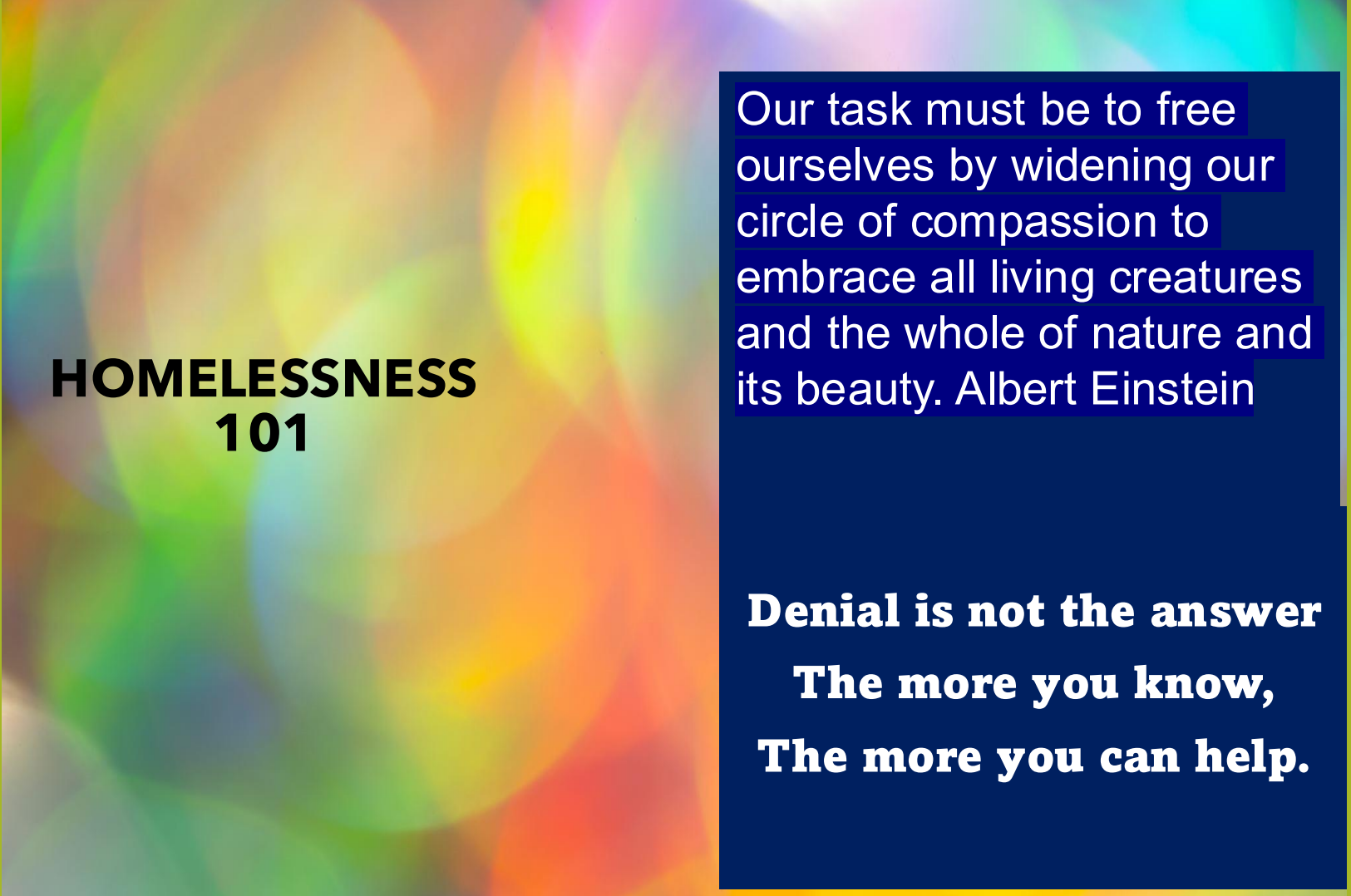




HOMELESSNESS 101

Our task must be to free ourselves by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty. Albert Einstein

**Denial is not the answer
The more you know,
The more you can help.**

Written by Laura Hansen, C.E.O.
The Coalition to End Homelessness

OUTLINE

The Coalition

Definitions of Homelessness

Demographics

Research models

Inequity

Real numbers

Mainstream services

Major Issues

Attitudes of the Homeless

Attitudes of Society

Consequences for all

History of the Coalition

Interacting with the Homeless

Spending on Homelessness

Our Expertise and Convictions

Dealing with the homeless

Afraid of losing your housing

If you become homeless

Tips to make it on the street

Questions

How do you define homelessness?

Are you actually sleeping outside?
in?

What State do you live

Do you have a tent?

Are you sleeping in your car?

What about a run-down house without electricity or water?

Someone else's house when they don't know it?

A homeless shelter
homelessness?

Do people try to hide their

Jail or Prison but time's up and there is no place to go?

What does your age have to do with it?

As Many Definitions as Homeless People

Most agencies MUST use a government definition of Homelessness in order to get government funding. Government departments have different definitions.

SOAR ACT

- 1.. An individual or family that lacks a fixed residence or lives somewhere not meant for human habitation,
2. An individual or family who will lose their housing within 14 days
3. Youth 25 years or younger who lack stable housing (couch-surfing)
4. Those fleeing domestic violence

Other Considerations

For Children in School, The Title IX, Part A, McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Improvement Act. The Federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act states that children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence are considered homeless. This is very similar to HUD's SOAR definition of homelessness, in fact nearly the same yet somehow all locations find many more homeless children in school than they do adults who are homeless?

Perhaps it is because they are all in one place and therefore easier to count?



Kinds of Homelessness

Chronic
homelessness.

...

Episodic
homelessness.

Transitional
Homelessness.

Hidden
Homelessness.

Issues with Counting the Homeless



Homeless people don't always look homeless and often lie about being homeless because there is a stigma to homelessness and poverty, homeless people rarely gather for easy counting. You can count people at a shelter, but what if they are somewhere else? Researchers have spent years trying to figure out the most accurate way to count or estimate the number of homeless people in America overall, in states and cities. Government counts are clearly recognized as among the worst in terms of Research studies, but everyone is required to use that methodology if they want government funding.

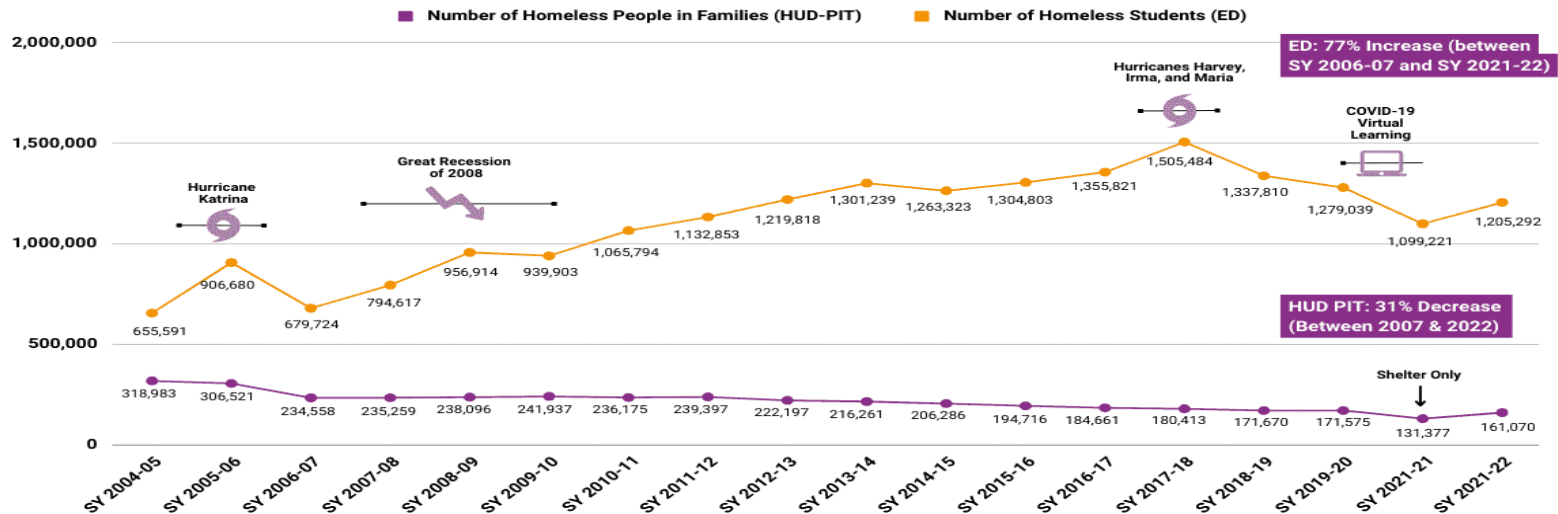
THE GOVERNMENT

Criminal

According to the Washington Post referring to the HUD homeless count, “Daniel Flaming of the Los Angeles-based Economic Roundtable said the margin of error in these counts would be large — if it were published at all. The counts are conservative, and they provide a low-end estimate.”

On one Day, January 25, every other year, communities use what HUD calls a Point-in-Time Count. Untrained volunteers go out and look for homeless people to count. Can you see any research methodology issues with this practice?

The government numbers don't even match their own



Sources:

1. HUD Sources for Persons in Family Households with Children, 2005-2009: HUD identifies the category as persons in households with children. 2010: HUD changes the category to person in households with adults and children. 2011-2020: HUD changes the category to persons in households with at least one adult and one child. *This category includes households with one adult and at least one child under age 18. Note: HUD data represent a single point in time, while ED data represent an academic year.*
2. Homeless Student Data from the Department of Education Note: ED data for the 2022-2023 school year is not yet available.

DON'T COUNT ON IT

How the HUD Point-in-Time Count Underestimates
the Homelessness Crisis in America



NATIONAL LAW CENTER
ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

2017

All Counting methods, provide demographic information about the Homeless

Racial inequality with Native Americans and African Americans experiencing the most homelessness

Veterans experience homeless at a greater rate than non-veterans

The number of families with children who are homeless is greatly under-estimated,

Children raised in foster care are more likely to be homeless

LGBT, particularly young LGBT are more likely to be homeless

There are also issues that impact willingness to get help. Many homeless people have had problems with large institutions and avoid authorities of any kind.

Poverty, like Homeless, is Unequal



HUD Point-in-Time model

Con: No academic support for this model

Con: Depends on Volunteers with limited training.

Con: Only counts people they can see, and we know most homeless people try to avoid being seen because it often leads to arrest

Con: Most volunteers do not want to go to places that they consider “scary”, but very often those are the only places homeless people are allowed.

Con: Trust the word of the person being interviewed and often bring snacks so a non-homeless person has an incentive to say they are homeless.

Con: January is usually very cold and therefore fewer homeless people will be visible

Martha Burt, The Urban League



As a Research Methods specialist, Martha Burt found that the best way to count the homeless was to figure 10% of those living in poverty experienced homelessness at some point during the year. They may have been homeless all year, for three months, or for three days but they fit the HUD definition at some time during the year. This makes sense. How can you stay housed with little to no money.



PRO: Easy to count and highly regarded methodology. How many Americans fit the definition of poverty? According to the Census it is 38 million in 2024. Ten percent of that is 3,800,000. HUD reports 650,000 so Burt's methodology reports six times as many homeless people as HUD's



PRO: Burt's Methodology also allows us to use Census Data, which is a good source of information, to determine demographics, and is academically acceptable.



PRO: Does not rely on individuals to tell the truth.



CON: The government does not like it.

Census Based Model – Academy of Science

Take a random sampling (valid research method)

Ask them if they have ever been homeless, then apply this % to all Americans.

So, if we ask 10,000 randomly selected people if they have ever been homeless, and 7.4% say yes, then we figure that probably applies to the rest of Americans.

PROs: Consistent with academic research methods

CONs: There is a lot of shame around experiencing homelessness and many people will deny homeless experience creating an undercount.

CON: Focuses primarily on Children and Youth

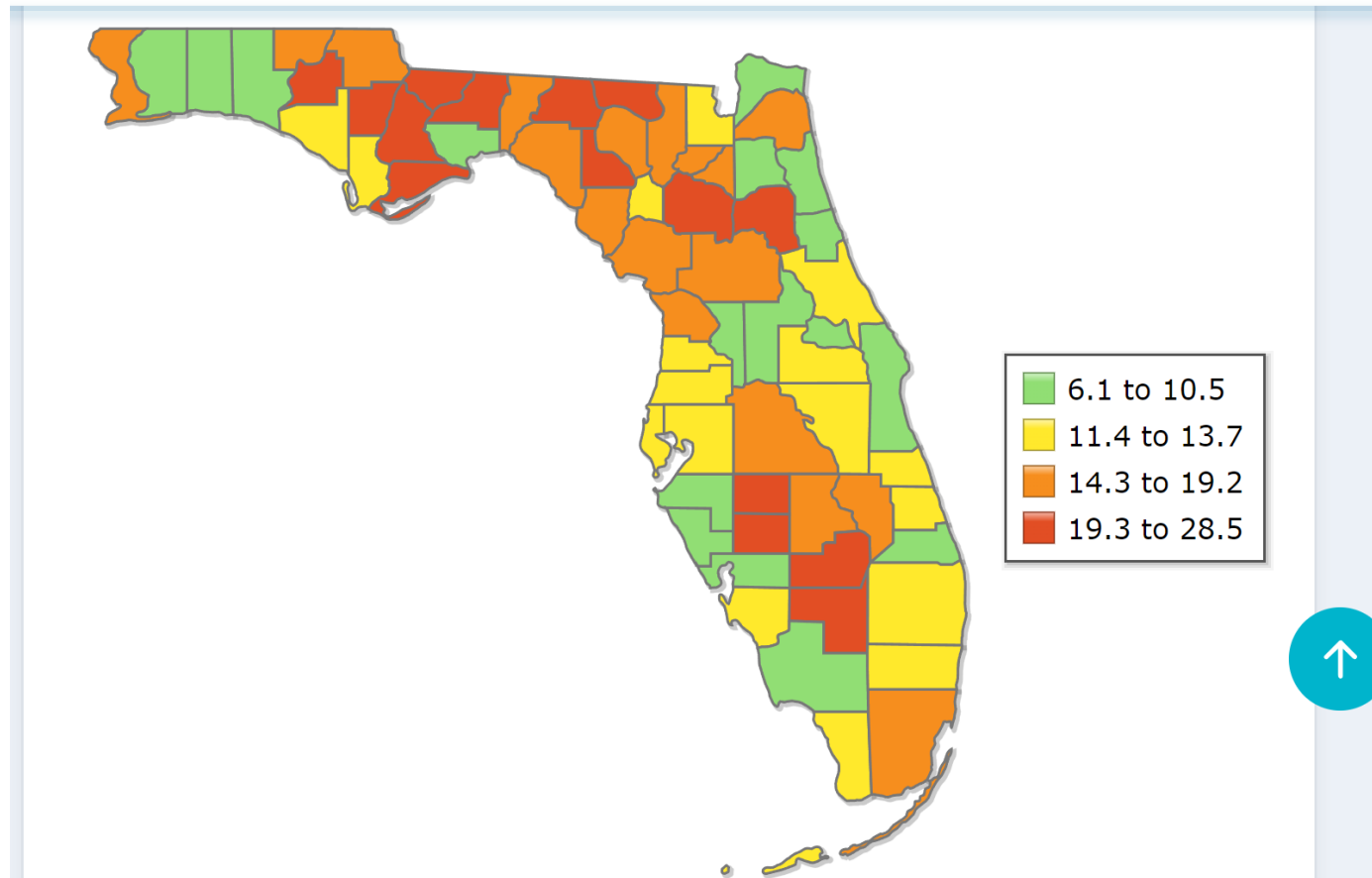
We end up with very different numbers

Total Americans: 341,516,526
(Census)

Method	HUD	Burt	Academy of Science
Time	Homeless one Day	Homeless during year	Homeless during life
	653,104	38,000,000 people in poverty x .10 = 3,800,000	$341,516,526 \times 7.4 =$ 25,272,223
Cons	6	2	1
Pros		3	1

One thing which validates Burt's numbers as well as the Academy of Science numbers is that if you if you assume the average person who experiences homelessness lives to 65 (research shows it is not that long but it depends on a lot of variables. If you take Burt's finding for one year, times 65 you end up at 24,700,000 which is really close to what the Academy of Science found. HUDs numbers do not validate any other numbers.

POVERTY IN FLORIDA



Using Burt's Methodology – During a Year

Homeless in U.S

$38,000,000 \times .1$

$= 3,800,000$

10% of people in poverty in the U.S.

Homeless in

Florida 56,700,000

$\times .1 = 5,670,000$

10% of people living in Poverty in Florida

Homeless in

Broward 238,880

$\times .1 = 23,888$

10% of people living below poverty in Broward

Public Services including mainstream services. What are mainstream services?

- Social Security
 - healthcare like hospitals and mental health care
- Libraries
- 911, Police, Fire, Ambulances, substance abuse programs
- Education
 - Veterans Benefits
 - Transportation
- Vital records

DO YOU THINK THERE ARE OTHER MAINSTREAM SERVICES? CAN YOU THINK OF ANY? DO YOU THINK THESE ARE THE SAME FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE AS THEY ARE FOR HOUSED PEOPLE? WHAT MIGHT BE DIFFERENT?

DOES ANYONE THINK LAW ENFORCEMENT DISCRIMINATES?



VICE

Stop Calling the Police on Homeless People

TOP HOMELESS HEALTH ISSUES



Source: <https://www.homelesshub.ca/blog/what-are-top-10-health-issues-homeless-people-face>

Who Cares?

- Worst cases, New mothers with twins being released from the hospital, wearing a hospital gown, with no place to go?
- Mainstream services are not allowed to discharge clients who have no place to go, but they also have no place to send them?
- Other big healthcare issues for the homeless include being hit by cars, fights with other homeless people, and suicide

Attitudes of the Homeless

Conscious that they are avoided by society, that people cannot look at them and always look away,

Feel as if they are a burden to everyone they know, and every place they go,

Extremely socially isolated,

Neglected by family and society.



How society feels about the homeless?

An example of hostile architecture that prevents the unhoused from sleeping on benches .

Society is largely concerned with wealth. The more money you have, the better off you are. The homeless, having nothing are as bad as it gets in a consumer culture like ours. The general population also believes that homelessness is a choice, homeless people are lazy alcoholic and drug addicts. The homeless are seen as violent and dangerous, certainly criminal who are looking to take advantage wherever they can..

CONSEQUENCES OF HOMELESSNESS



- **Personal** – at the time when a homeless person realizes that he/she won't have a roof to live under forever. It is hard for them to believe. It is this fact of not dealing with reality that makes homeless people less able to take actions, but they suffer psychologically as a result. Here some of the consequences:

- Loss of self esteem
- Becoming institutionalized
- Increase in substance misuse
- Loss of ability and will to care for oneself
- Increased danger of abuse and violence
- Increased chance of entering the criminal justice system
- Development of behavioral problems
- _____

More people were interested in the consequences of homelessness on society

- Unfunded use of emergency rooms and healthcare facilities
- Unfunded overuse of police and fire
- Overuse of incarceration facilities
- Overuse of mental health and substance abuse systems
- Public Health Problem
- Harm local economy and tourism
- Social stigma
- FEAR

HOMELESSNESS AND THE FAITH COMMUNITY

Homelessness and the Faith Community “If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall support him as though he were a stranger and a sojourner, and he shall live with you. Take no interest from him or profit, but fear your God, that your brother may live beside you. Leviticus 25:35-36

Pros

- *Nearly all religions teach kindness and compassion for the poor*
- *Many religious organizations actually provide services for the poor such as food and shelter*
- *Many religious people go out of their way to be kind to homeless and poor people*

Cons

- *Many people of faith approach homelessness in a puritanical way,*
- *Services provided by the faith community often preach their own way of spirituality as part of the service*
- *Many religions believe that lack of adherence to their beliefs is the reason for homelessness*
- *Often, and this is not just with the faith community, what is said on Sunday is different from what is done on Monday*

Very short history of the last 30 years

Coalition History

1987-1997

*The **Broward Coalition for the Homeless, Inc.** was organized in 1987 under the Florida State Statutes as the Broward Coalition for the Homeless, which required each DCF district (ours is District 10) to create a Coalition to oversee the Continuum of Care grant and to coordinate the Homeless “Continuum of Care”. The Continuum of Care was a “new” approach to homelessness sponsored by HUD in the aftermath of some historic hunger strikes by advocates (including Michael Stoops – a friend of our CEO until his recent death) in Washington D.C. The Coalition mainly relied on a couple of consultants since our Budget was \$12,000.00*

- **1997-2007**

- The Broward Coalition for the Homeless received a large grant of \$200,000.00. The Coalition Board decided to hire a C.E.O. to oversee all the work they were doing as well as the work they planned to do. The Board hired Laura Hansen as C.E.O. Laura got busy writing grants. In 2004, the Broward Coalition for the Homeless, Inc. filed for and procured a fictitious name and became known as the Coalition to End Homelessness.

- These were the years of Tent City and the beginning of the downtown shelter. Funding grew tremendously increasing our staff and programs.

2007-2017

The Great Recession hit the Coalition hard. Most of the grants secured from outside funders dried up. The Broward County Homeless Initiative Partnership (HIP) not only stopped funding us, but wrote to the State of Florida and asked to be recognized as the Broward Coalition for the Homeless. This meant they would get all our State Funding (12,000) and be responsible for determining if they were doing a good job helping the homeless or not.

At this time, it became clear that anyone wanting Government funding could not continue to disagree with what the government said. As a Coalition we were determined to represent the homeless position not the government position. Nevertheless, it was difficult to not disappear without public funding. This all happened within about a six-month period. Not surprisingly, many of our staff and Board members left when the going got tough.

Laura stayed on unpaid for two or three years. The entire office was moved to the downtown office (next to the Lutheran Church on 3rd Avenue). The Coalition raised only enough to pay the small rent on the downtown office, health insurance for Laura and a little more for auditor fees (which very generously were allowed to be paid late, thank you Steve Rice). The organization tried to just hold it together.

The Great Recession was hardest on those with the least. As funding dried up (Foundations give earnings from investments) the number of people needing help exploded. It was like bailing out the ocean with a spoon.



2017-2021

While we were huddling in our downtown office, unsure of how to proceed, homeless people came to our door for services. Several homeless men lived at the Church next-door and would come over to use our shower or to borrow a razor. It got cold that winter and we did a blanket drive, Americorp gave us a few vistas. (Americorp is federal government program to provide work to people with a job where they can learn needed skills. We began getting donations of things like razors, soap, and shampoo, then we had food donations. Before we knew what was happening, we became a drop-in center. Before things began to truly look up, the neighbors behind the house started to complain. The complaining got worse. NIMBY (Not in our Backyard) is a constant problem for anyone serving the homeless.

This turned out to be the best thing that could have happened to us as we found a great place with plenty of space for our clients. It did not have a shower facility but we hoped to fix that in the future. People still called us the Yellow House although we were no longer in a yellow house. For many years we provided a lot of services to homeless people at that office. Sheryl Smith and some volunteers helped with food stamp applications, bus pass applications, disability applications, a mail center for those who had no address routed from our PO box. We had a well-stocked clothing room – our “Macy’s for the Homeless” and a working kitchen with a hot lunch every day supplied by donations of food and appliances. Many of us look back to this as “the good old days.”

It could not last forever. The landlord sold the building due to NIMBY. After a brief and unsuccessful attempt to re-start “the Yellow House” down the street that old saying NIMBY became clear to us. If we want to do something like that again we have a couple of options, all of them problematic:

- Provide mobile services through a bus or a van (what many other providers are now doing)
- Have a budget that allows us to rent short-term knowing we will be kicked out as soon as the neighborhood gets together.
- Provide limited services. For example, hand out food and clothing on Tuesdays at a certain Church that isn’t busy on Tuesdays.
- Work from home and meet clients in the field so that a bunch of clients never gathered anywhere.

While the Board considered these things, our C.E.O. suggested a program to help homeless families with first, last and security. This was a huge need and would not require an office. There has been a steep learning curve but by using volunteers we have been continually improving.

NOW

As most of the board knows, we received a large contribution from the Alexander Foundation. We have more money in the bank now than at almost any other time in our history. Our C.E.O., after years of living week to week, is cautious and prefers not to rapidly add new expenses to the organizational budget. After going through the recession and COVID 19 there is the understandable urge to just continue doing what we are doing: helping homeless families.

- Homeless people are not that different than you or I – they like to laugh, welcome friends and love dogs.
- Some homeless organizations actually pay consultants to come teach their staff “How to talk to homeless people.”
- The amount of money spent on stupid projects is amazing. 90 days at a family shelter can cost more than our program which is designed to keep people housed forever.
- Like Healthcare, it has become the Homeless Industrial Complex



According to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, the average cost per family for a night in a traditional shelter is \$165. For a staffed hotel, that number goes up to \$185. And for unstaffed hotel or motel sites, the price tag balloons to \$330 per night for each household, which is roughly \$9,900 per month. "The average cost per family for unstaffed hotels is higher because it includes costs for providing food," Noah Bombard, a spokesperson for the office, wrote in an email. While meals are provided to all shelter residents who lack kitchen access, Bombard said the cost is higher in unstaffed hotels where the state must contract separately for food.

WHAT? WHY

Only a portion of the savings attributable to the continued decline anticipated in the family shelter population results in city savings. The average daily rate paid in 2020 for temporary housing and services for a family in shelter was \$199, or \$72,600 annually.

Fiscal Brief - Independent Budget Office

The more you know about how the government "helps" the homeless, the more baffled you will be

Our Expertise

- The Coalition was founded in 1989 and has 34 years of experience working with homeless individuals and families, homeless service providers, and the community. We have provided dozens of trainings for a wide variety of groups including law enforcement, service providers, and homeless families.
- There are many widely held beliefs about the homeless that we dispute. For example, many people in houses have substance abuse and mental health problems as well as physical disabilities. Therefore, it is unfair to say that people are homeless because of their behavioral health issues. We know that homelessness is an economic issue, not a moral issue.
- Homeless people rarely have time to organize despite countless laws being passed that criminalize not having a place to stay. The Coalition serves as the voice for the homeless and we stand up for the rights of people who are poor, we also advocate for more funding not only for shelter but for important programs that benefit people in shelter such as mental health, housing, and employment.

Our Expertise

- Criminalization of homelessness is everywhere. Looking back at the history of the world, we find that whenever a group of people is marginalized or seen as “other”, they are treated differently than the majority population. While the poor have always been treated differently, homeless people often suffer dire consequences as a result of their homeless status. In Fort Lauderdale alone there have been efforts to make it illegal to give anything to a homeless person (food, money, etc.) Such laws would never be considered for the majority population.
- As a result of their unique experience with homelessness, we consider homeless people integral to our work. Many of our volunteers, staff, and board members have had personal experience with homelessness which helps all of us understand the barriers that they face. We have found that there is a profound disconnect between the people making decisions for the homeless (elected officials for example) and the people on the street. For example, for a long time in Fort Lauderdale psychiatric help was free to homeless people through the Federal Healthcare for the Homeless grant. At the same time there was no funding for prescription medication. This is just one of many examples where efforts to assist the homeless flounder because the people designing and funding programs do not always understand the realities of being homeless.

Our Convictions

We believe

Housing is a human right

Access to healthcare is a human right

Homelessness is not a crime

Individuals and families facing homelessness deserve an immediate response

Homeless and previously homeless people must be involved in every part of our work

It is a national shame that so many veterans remain homeless

Families should not be punished for poverty and children belong with their parents whenever possible

We must be scrupulously careful with every donated dollar

Our work must be totally transparent

Our Convictions

- *Discrimination cannot be tolerated for any reason including discrimination based on race, color, ethnicity, criminal background, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, gender identity, marital status, national origin, income, employment or housing status*
- *Denial, minimization and/or ignorance of homelessness is damaging and perpetuates the problem of homelessness*
- *Collaboration and cooperation with like-minded individuals and organizations is the key to building sufficient momentum to create change*
- *We should strive to cause no harm*
- *Coronavirus has disproportionately impacted the homeless population*
- *Black lives matter*
- *Addiction is a disease, addiction and mental health should be covered by insurance like any other health problem*
- *People with substance abuse and/or mental health problems are not wrong or bad and are equally deserving of our compassion*
- *progress requires coordinating with other agencies at the local, state, national and international levels*
- *Pets are the closest tie many homeless people have; shelter and services should accommodate pets*

What do you do when you see a homeless person on the street?

Basically, the same way you would anyone else,

But if you still feel insecure:

- Striking up a conversation is no different than with anyone else. You can say hello, ask how someone is or what plans they have for the day.
- The same rules apply to striking up a conversation with any stranger, just be friendly and respectful and be wary of overstepping any boundaries. Many people will strike up a conversation, others might not want to talk. That's fine, too, it's all about making sure the other person is comfortable.
- As well as asking how someone is doing, you could also see if they need any help with anything.
- Homelessness can make it almost impossible for rough sleepers to access services that those with a secure home can often take for granted. Healthcare can be tricky to get while setting up essential facilities required for work or benefits, like a bank account, are also tough without an address.

WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN I SEE A BEGGAR?

Give what you can

Benefits of kindness and compassion

Research is showing that people who are kind and compassionate are more content with their lives. They have better physical and mental health and feel less isolated, fostering stronger relationships. Small acts of kindness, such as a smile, or 'hello' can have enormous power. At the very least, don't look away, don't make anyone feel invisible – the least you can do is to do no harm.

THE QUESTION I
GET ASKED THE
MOST

What if you think you might lose your housing?

If you are not yet homeless? NEVER RUN AWAY FROM A DECENT HOME OR EVEN SEMI-DECENT HOME.

Do everything possible to stay where you are and keep your car. Shelter programs meet only a fraction of the need, and it is highly likely you will sleep outdoors for weeks or months before being placed in shelter.

If you are lucky enough to get into shelter, there will be a lot of rules, and you may struggle to meet their criteria

If you must leave home, due to abuse, try to find another place to stay first. Do you have friends or family anywhere else that will take you in? Fort Lauderdale Police can give you a free bus pass if someone on the other line promises to accept you>

What if you are already homeless

The Homeless Helpline 954-563-4357

You must call this number first. Most shelters only take people referred from the homeless hotline.

You must complete an intake – do not hang up without doing an intake because no intake, no shelter.

Only then will you be told where to meet the outreach team which is at a different place every day due to NIMBY

There will probably be 30 other people there, and maybe one bed.

You may have to meet outreach for weeks before you are placed

During that time take advantage of other services for the homeless – 211 can tell you about them.

While you wait for help ...

Tips from other homeless people

There are free showers at the beach.

Don't beg on a corner someone else is already using.

Keep your valuables in your pants – including I.D.

Make sure someone you trust has a copy of any important documents you have in case they are stolen or lost.

Keep your arms through your backpack straps and sleep on it at night.

The streets are dangerous – don't antagonize others

NEVER argue with law enforcement

Some gyms are affordable and a great way to keep clean and keep your things.

Avoid appearing homeless

BELIEVE: FOR MOST PEOPLE HOMELESSNESS IS A SHORT PERIOD IN THEIR LIVES.

Questions

References

- [The Pitfalls of HUD's Point-in-Time Count for Children, Youth, and Families](#)
- [Dec 19, 2023 | Guest Blog, News and Views, Policy Updates, SHC Perspectives](#)
- [On December 15, 2023, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\) released its 2023 Annual Homeless Assessment Report Part I \(AHAR\). The 2023 report showed a record number of families and youth in shelters, or who were in a visibly unsheltered situation, on a single night in January.](#)
- [As organizations representing service providers, educators, and advocates who work directly with families and youth, we are alarmed at the reported increases in family and youth homelessness. But we contest HUD's assertion these increases reverse a steady decline in family homelessness. Our networks confront a very different reality — as do the children, youth, and families who are rendered invisible and overlooked by HUD's data.](#)
- [In this brief, we explain why HUD's data are flawed and misleading, and why other federal data sources provide a more accurate picture of child, youth, and family homelessness.](#)
- [This is important because government and local communities use federal data to set critical priorities for funding, services, and action. It is also important because until children, youth, and families are accurately reflected in all federal data, they will be underserved, which ultimately perpetuates adult homelessness.](#)
- [The bottom line is that policymakers and the public should view HUD's homelessness data with extreme skepticism, particularly with respect to children, youth, and families. Communities should look to a variety of other data sources — especially public schools, early childhood programs, and youth-serving programs — to get a fuller and more accurate picture of the prevalence of homelessness and the needs of those who experience it. Finally, Congress should remove barriers to HUD Homeless Assistance by enacting the bipartisan Homeless Children and Youth Act and providing flexible funding directly to child- and youth-serving agencies to help meet housing and related needs of children, youth, and families.](#)
- [HUD's Data and Methodology Account for Only a Fraction of Children, Youth, and Families Experiencing Homelessness, Excluding Many of the Most Vulnerable.](#)
- [The Annual Homeless Assessment Report Part I \(AHAR\) provides estimates of people who are in shelter and in unsheltered locations on a single night. These counts, known as the Point-in-Time \(PIT\) counts, are conducted by communities nationwide, and typically occur during the last week in January of each year. HUD's "Point in Time" \(PIT\) count only measures the number of people who are in shelter or transitional housing, or who are seen during street counts.](#)
- [However, most families and youth who are homeless do not stay in shelters, transitional housing, or on the streets.](#)
- [Of the more than 1.2 million children and youth experiencing homelessness identified by public schools in the 2021-2022 school year \(the most recent year for which national data is available\), only 4% were unsheltered, and 72% were staying in shelters. The rest were staying in motels, or staying temporarily with other people due to lack of alternatives. This invisible and unstable homelessness is not included in HUD's limited methodology.](#)
- [Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America found that of the 3.5 million 18-24 year-olds and 700,000 13-17 year-olds who experienced homelessness, nearly three quarters who slept on the streets or in shelters also 'couch-surfed' \(stayed with others\), demonstrating the fluid nature of homeless living arrangements.](#)
- [Lack of Appropriate Shelter Options, Fear of Child Welfare Authorities, and Concern About the Safety of Shelters Explain Why Most Families and Youth Who are Homeless are Not in Shelters or on the Streets.](#)
- [Shelters and transitional housing are often full, unable to serve families as a unit, do not accept unaccompanied minor youth, or simply do not exist in too many communities. When families and youth are not able to access shelter, they are less likely to be included in HUD's counts.](#)

Appendix

- However, most families and youth who are homeless do not stay in shelters, transitional housing, or on the streets.
- Of the more than 1.2 million children and youth experiencing homelessness identified by public schools in the 2021 -2022 school year (the most recent year for which national data is available), only 4% were unsheltered, and 12% were staying in shelters. The rest were staying in motels, or staying temporarily with other people due to lack of alternatives. This invisible and unstable homelessness is not included in HUD's limited methodology.
- Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America found that of the 3.5 million 18-24 year-olds and 700,000 13-17 year-olds who experienced homelessness, nearly three quarters who slept on the streets or in shelters also 'couch-surfed' (stayed with others), demonstrating the fluid nature of homeless living arrangements.
- Lack of Appropriate Shelter Options, Fear of Child Welfare Authorities, and Concern About the Safety of Shelters Explain Why Most Families and Youth Who are Homeless are Not in Shelters or on the Streets.
- Shelters and transitional housing are often full, unable to serve families as a unit, do not accept unaccompanied minor youth, or simply do not exist in too many communities. When families and youth are not able to access shelter, they are less likely to be included in HUD's counts.
- Families experiencing homelessness are also less likely than single adults to stay on the streets and other outdoor locations where they can be included in PIT counts, often because they are afraid their children will be removed from their custody. Unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness fear interactions with authorities and exploitation from older adults whether in a shelter, on the street, or staying on someone's couch.
- For these reasons, families and youth are much more likely to stay temporarily with other people, or in motels — situations that are themselves very unstable, often unsafe, and put them at risk of trafficking. They are also more common in rural and suburban areas, where the PIT count results in dramatic under-counts.
- Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Who Are Excluded from HUD's Definition of Homelessness and its Data Are As Vulnerable as Those Who Are Included.
- Two studies of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data shows that high school students experiencing homelessness are at high risk of harm regardless of where they sleep. A 2019 study demonstrated dire risk of rape, assault, suicide, substance abuse, hunger, bullying and other risks, whether high school students experiencing homelessness are sleeping in a motel, a car, a shelter, temporarily with other people, or moving so frequently that they cannot identify a usual sleeping arrangement over a thirty-day period. Vulnerability to these harms was comparable across different homeless situations. A 2022 study found that high school students who reported homelessness had 208% higher odds of sexual victimization and 347% higher odds of physical victimization. Each homeless sleeping location, including staying with others and motels, was associated with increased odds of experiencing both sexual and physical victimization compared to sleeping at a parent or guardian's home, underscoring the vulnerability of all high school students who experience homelessness, regardless of where they sleep.
- Four studies (California, Louisiana, Minnesota, and Washington state) find that children and youth who stay with other people temporarily, or in motels — considered homeless under the education definition — have comparable or worse educational risks and outcomes as those who stay in shelters or are unsheltered.
- School Data Show Different Trends in Family and Youth Homelessness