

Family Homelessness

There are many reasons that a family becomes homeless; lack of affordable housing, poverty, domestic violence and loss of work. In addition, as the cost of housing continues to outpace low-income families' earnings, more and more parents and children are at risk of homelessness. For families already struggling to raise children in the face of great odds, even the smallest bump can seriously jeopardize their housing stability.

Being homeless, particularly for mothers and children, can have devastating results.

Mothers experiencing homelessness struggle with mental health issues.

- They have three times the rate of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (36%) and twice the rate of drug and alcohol dependence.
- About 50% of mothers experienced a major depressive episode since becoming homeless.

Mothers often are in poor physical health.

- Over one-third have a chronic physical health condition (e.g., asthma, chronic bronchitis, hypertension).
- They have ulcers at four times the rate of other women.
- 20% have anemia, compared to 2% of other women under age 45.

Children experiencing homelessness are sick four times more often than other children. They have:

- Four times as many respiratory infections.
- Twice as many ear infections.
- Five times more gastrointestinal problems.

Among young homeless children:

- One out of six have emotional disturbances. This is twice the rate of other children.
- 16% of homeless preschoolers have behavior problems including severe aggression and hostility.

Among school-age homeless children:

- 47% have problems such as anxiety, depression, and withdrawal, compared to 18% of other school-age children.
- 36% manifest delinquent or aggressive behavior, compared to 17% of other school-age children.

**Statistics compiled from the National Center on Family Homelessness*