

# Homelessness

## Youth Formerly in Foster Care Families with Young Children, and Runaway and Homeless Youth

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## Family and youth homelessness is a key issue in child welfare

- Homelessness and inadequate housing:
  - Increases risk of entry into foster care
  - Causes delays in reunification
  - Increases stressors in a family's life
  - Lessens effectiveness of services and treatment



SOP = Street  
Outreach  
Program.

## The intersection between the child welfare system and homelessness is well researched

- In the SOP sample, more than half (50.6%) had at some point in their lives stayed in a foster home or group home
- Of the 5,583 youth who completed all three waves of the NYTD survey, 43% reported having a homeless experience by age 21 (at either 17, 19 or 21)
- In 2015, for 10% of children entering foster care, inadequate housing was reported as a reason associated with the removal



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## A population at high risk of becoming homeless –



- youth aging out of foster care or leaving the child welfare system



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## Ending Youth Homelessness

The varied and unique needs of youth experiencing homelessness require a range of interventions that meet their physical, developmental, and social needs in 4 main areas:

- Stable Housing
- Permanent Connections
- Education or Employment
- Social-emotional well-being



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## Family Homelessness



- Family homelessness is largely a poverty issue
  - Income or an economic crisis making housing unaffordable
- Families experiencing domestic violence have high rates of homelessness
- Homeless families are often hidden from view and far outnumber individuals experiencing chronic homelessness



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## Homelessness and Early Childhood

- Infancy is the period of life when a person is at highest risk of living in a homeless shelter in the United States.
  - The age at which an individual in the U.S. is most likely to enter shelter is age 0-1, followed by 1-2.
- More than half of the children in families using shelter programs over the course of a year are under age 6
- In the US, 1 in 18 children under age 6 are experiencing homelessness



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## Impact on Young Children

- Homeless children have lower birth weights and experience higher levels of childhood illness.
- Homelessness puts children at risk of poor early development and educational well-being.
- Trauma and extreme stress in childhood can lead to detrimental changes in brain structure and function.
- Mothers experiencing homelessness have a higher rate of depression, severe traumatized history and post-traumatic stress disorder.



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## Ending Family Homelessness

Housed people are not Homeless:

- Housing First is an approach that emphasizes stable, permanent housing as a primary strategy for ending homelessness.
- Rapid re-housing involves providing temporary financial assistance and services to return people experiencing homelessness to permanent housing, and is low-barrier (offered without preconditions (such as employment, income, absence of criminal record, or sobriety). The resources and services provided are typically tailored to the unique needs of the household.



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## National, State and Community Response

Our work in ending homelessness is not simply about a collection of programs -- it is about providing key building blocks:

- Systems change
- Policy change and coordination
- Leveraging mainstream resources
- Building collaborative responses
- Doing what works



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## The Role of Child Welfare Agencies

Effective cross-agency collaborations must involve the child welfare system

1. Actively consider and prioritize the role of housing in child welfare outcomes
2. Use child welfare data with other data to understand housing needs of families and youth
3. Participate in Continuum of Care meetings
4. Meet the Public Housing Authorities in the community
5. Partner with housing providers, including landlords
6. Use case management to leverage housing resources and support services
7. Ensure a range of housing options through transition planning and extended foster care



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## Leverage Mainstream Systems

- Informational Memorandum to States about efforts by child welfare agencies, local communities, and federal agencies to end family and youth homelessness, published January 18, 2017:  
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/im1703.pdf>
- Informational Memorandum to States about the use of TANF funds to serve homeless families at risks of experiencing homelessness, published February 20, 2013  
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/resource/tanf-acf-im-2013-01>
- Definitions of Homelessness for Federal Programs Serving Children, Youth, and Families chart illustrating the similarities and differences of the two major federal definitions of homelessness in use by the Department of Education and the Housing and Urban Development  
[https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/homelessness\\_definition.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/homelessness_definition.pdf)



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