



# People Experiencing Homelessness

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# Learning Objectives

- ▶ Develop an understanding of the changing definitions of homelessness.
- ▶ Explore the cultural implications of homelessness in a service setting.
- ▶ Discuss best practices in engaging with people experiencing homelessness.





**Who are people  
experiencing  
homelessness?**

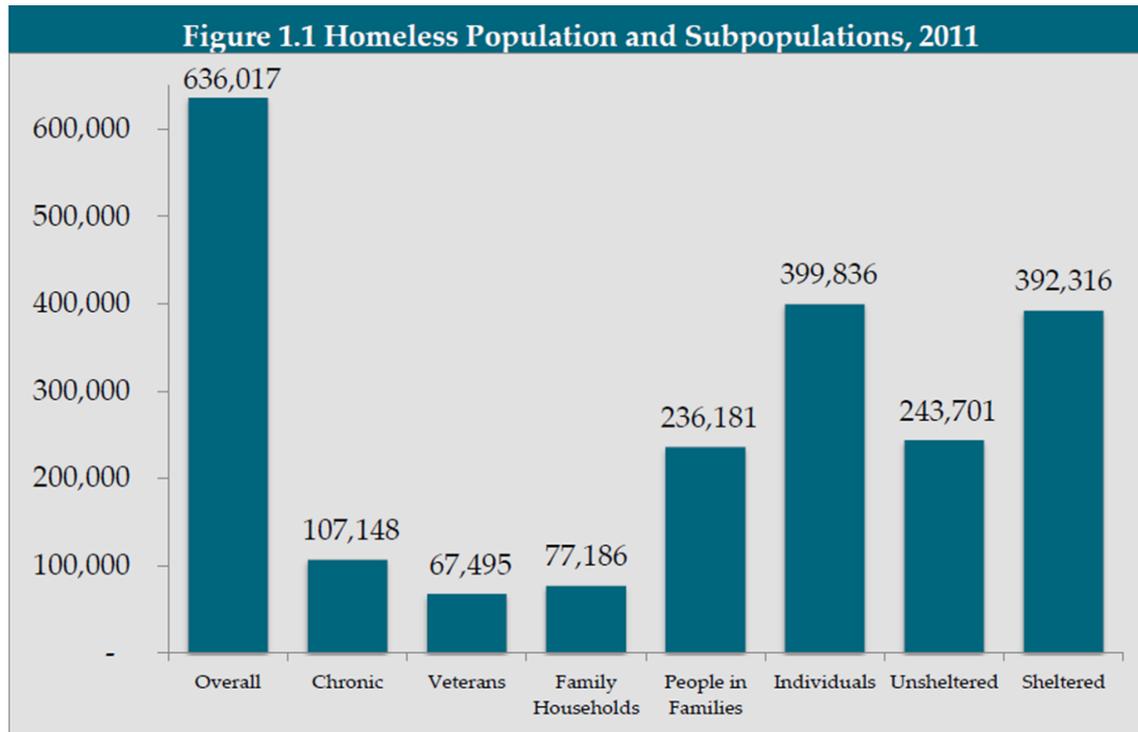
# What qualifies someone as homeless?

- ▶ People who are living in a place not meant for human habitation, emergency shelter, transitional housing, or are exiting an institution where they stayed for up to *90 days*.
- ▶ People who are losing their primary nighttime residence within *14 days* and lack resources to maintain or remain in housing (doubled/tripled up, motel/hotel).
- ▶ *Families with children or unaccompanied youth who are unstably housed and likely to continue in that state.*
- ▶ People fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence and lack resources to obtain permanent housing.

National Alliance to End Homelessness,  
[http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/579e3b67bd7eeb3fc3\\_q0m6i6az8.pdf](http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/579e3b67bd7eeb3fc3_q0m6i6az8.pdf)



# Who experiences homelessness?



Note: subpopulation data do not equal the overall homeless population number. This is because people could be counted as part of more than one subpopulation (e.g. a person could be an unsheltered, chronic, veteran individual). Further, family households are a separate measure as a household is comprised of numerous people (e.g. at least one adult and at least one child).

National Alliance to End Homelessness

<http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/soh-2012-chapter-one-homelessness-counts>



# Who experiences homelessness?

- ▶ **1.5M** people experience homelessness each year.
  - 85% of people experiencing homelessness are single adults.
  - 62% male, 38% female
  - 22% under 18, 23.5% are 18–30, 52% are 31–61. 2.8% are 62+
  - 41.6 % white, 9.7% Latino, 37% African American, 11.7% other races
  - 26.2 % had a serious mental illness, 34.7% had chronic substance use

Homeless Resource Center

[http://homeless.samhsa.gov/ResourceFiles/hrc\\_factsheet.pdf](http://homeless.samhsa.gov/ResourceFiles/hrc_factsheet.pdf)





# Who experiences chronic homelessness?

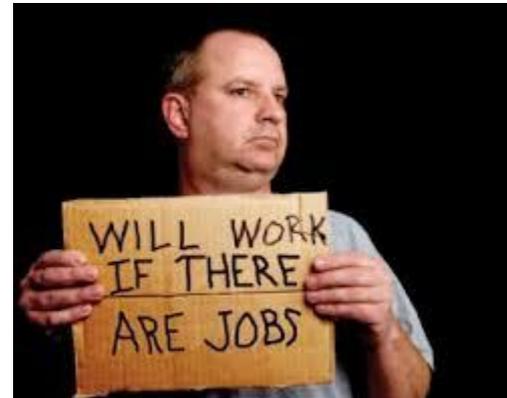
- ▶ Unaccompanied individual with a disabling condition who has been continuously homeless for a year or more or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past 3 years.
- ▶ Must have a disabling condition (60% mental illness, 80%, substance use, HIV/AIDS, medical)
- ▶ More likely to be male
- ▶ More likely to be between “middle-age”

Homeless Resource Center  
[http://homeless.samhsa.gov/ResourceFiles/hrc\\_factsheet.pdf](http://homeless.samhsa.gov/ResourceFiles/hrc_factsheet.pdf)



# Who experiences short-term homelessness?

- ▶ Typically male, under 30
- ▶ Less likely to have a disability (3–12% mental illness, 28–50% substance use)



Homeless Resource Center

[http://homeless.samhsa.gov/ResourceFiles/hrc\\_factsheet.pdf](http://homeless.samhsa.gov/ResourceFiles/hrc_factsheet.pdf)



# Who experiences family homelessness?



- ▶ More likely to be single mother
- ▶ More likely to have a trauma history (92%)
- ▶ More likely to be non-white
- ▶ Less likely to have a disabling condition
- ▶ 42% of homeless children are under 6

Homeless Resource Center

[http://homeless.samhsa.gov/ResourceFiles/hrc\\_factsheet.pdf](http://homeless.samhsa.gov/ResourceFiles/hrc_factsheet.pdf)



# Who experiences youth homelessness?

- ▶ Majority are 13 or older
- ▶ 12% are ages 17–24
- ▶ Gender distribution varies
- ▶ Race/ethnicity varies
- ▶ 20–35% of homeless youth identify as LGBT
- ▶ Higher rates of mental health problems
- ▶ Higher rates of substance use
- ▶ Higher rates of trauma history and trauma during homelessness
- ▶ 14–53% had foster care involvement



# Who are the older adults experiencing homelessness?



- ▶ More likely to be male
- ▶ More likely to be a person of color
- ▶ More likely to have a disability  
(89% physical, 50% serious mental illness, 31% substance use)



Homeless Resource Center

[http://homeless.samhsa.gov/ResourceFiles/hrc\\_factsheet.pdf](http://homeless.samhsa.gov/ResourceFiles/hrc_factsheet.pdf)



# Who are the veterans experiencing homelessness?

- ▶ 1 / 10 people experiencing homelessness are veterans
- ▶ 1 / 3 people experiencing chronic homelessness are veterans
- ▶ 1 / 3 veterans experiencing homelessness are chronically homeless
- ▶ ½ of homeless veterans are in California, Florida, New York, and Texas
- ▶ More likely to be Vietnam era
- ▶ More likely to be male
- ▶ More likely to be middle-age
- ▶ More likely to be non-white
- ▶ 45% experience mental illness
- ▶ 70% experience substance use



Homeless Resource Center  
[http://homeless.samhsa.gov/ResourceFiles/hrc\\_factsheet.pdf](http://homeless.samhsa.gov/ResourceFiles/hrc_factsheet.pdf)



# Who are people experiencing homelessness?

Looking back, I realized that someone who had figured out how to survive on the streets is an incredibly resilient person. The people we work with are incredible survivors, creative, resourceful, caring, and very good at making ends meet with very little money– all they needed was to be given a chance to demonstrate all of their capabilities.

– Sam Tsemberis





What is the culture of  
homelessness?

# What contributes to homelessness?

- ▶ Risk factors (NAEH, 2011)
  - Unemployment, foreclosure, doubled up, high cost of housing, lack of health insurance, discharged from prison, aged out of foster care.
- ▶ Risk factors (Shelton et al, 2009)
  - Adverse childhood factors, socioeconomic difficulty, mental health problems, substance use.
  - Involvement in crime was not independently associated with homelessness.



# What are the cultural implications of homelessness– Values/Norms

- ▶ Self–Survival
- ▶ Relationships
- ▶ Hope
- ▶ Basic Necessities

Hubbert, A. (2005). An ethnonursing research study: adults residing in a midwestern Christian philosophy urban homeless shelter. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, 16(3), 236–244.



# What are the cultural implications of homelessness– Lifestyle

- ▶ Nomadic
- ▶ Day-to-day perspective
- ▶ Focus on survival and basic necessities

Davis, R. (1996). *Tapping Into The Homeless Culture*. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 12:176–183.



# What are the cultural implications of homelessness– Social Bonds

- ▶ Detachment from the community...and social isolation
- ▶ Social bonds between people experiencing homelessness



Flaskerud, J., & Strehlow, A. (2008). Cultural competence column. A culture of homelessness? *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 29(10), 1151–1154.



# What are the cultural implications of homelessness– Relationships

- ▶ “The stress of living in such a situation makes lasting relationships difficult. Instead, a relationship is someone to lift their spirits every once in a while and someone to help them through the hard times.”

Nursing 322

<http://nursing322sp10.wordpress.com/spotlight-on-the-homeless-population/>



# What are the cultural implications of homelessness–Learning

- ▶ Here and now focus for survival
- ▶ Invisibility
- ▶ Overall, these two concepts of focusing on the here and now of survival and invisibility are two examples of the learning that occurs within the homeless culture.

Davis, R. (1996). *Tapping Into The Homeless Culture*. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 12:176–183.



# What are the cultural implications of homelessness– Work

- ▶ The most generalized view about homeless people is that they have no work ethic and just need to go get a job.
- ▶ 13% of the homeless population is employed.
- ▶ Vicious cycle of how to keep or get a job when homeless.

The National Coalition for the Homeless. *Who is Homeless?* (2009) Retrieved March 19, 2010, from <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/who.html>.





How can we support  
people experiencing  
homelessness?

# What are the ingredients for evidence based practices in homelessness?

- ▶ Services that meet people where they're at (geographically and philosophically)
- ▶ Low demand or harm reduction
- ▶ Consumer choice
- ▶ Trauma-informed
- ▶ Coordinated approach across service-systems

Homeless Resource Center, Expert Panel on Evidence Based Practices in Homeless Services, <http://homeless.samhsa.gov/ResourceFiles/izfgr0yt.pdf>, Retrieved 12/3/12



# What are the evidence based practices in homelessness: Housing/Income

## ▶ Housing/Income

- Housing First
- Permanent Supportive Housing/Services in Supportive Housing
- Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR)
- Supported Employment/Employment First

Homeless Resource Center,  
<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Channel/Evidence-based-Practices-and-Innovations-509.aspx>, Retrieved 12/3/12.



# What are the evidence based practices in homelessness: Behavioral Health

## ▶ Behavioral Health

- Motivational Interviewing/Stages of Change
- Recovery and Wellness
- Illness Management and Recovery
- Integrated Treatment for Dual Disorders
- Assertive Community Treatment
- Critical Time Intervention
- Trauma-Informed Care

Homeless Resource Center, <http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Channel/Evidence-based-Practices-and-Innovations-509.aspx>, Retrieved 12/3/12.



# Questions?



# References

- ▶ Davis, R. (1996). Tapping Into The Homeless Culture. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 12:176–183.
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- ▶ National Alliance to End Homelessness, [http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/579e3b67bd7eeb3fc3\\_q0m6i6az8.pdf](http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/579e3b67bd7eeb3fc3_q0m6i6az8.pdf)
- ▶ National Alliance to End Homelessness. *State of Homelessness in America 2011*. <http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/state-of-homelessness-in-america-2011>. Retrieved 12/3/12.
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- ▶ Nursing 322, <http://nursing322sp10.wordpress.com/spotlight-on-the-homeless-population/>, Retrieved 12/3/12.
- ▶ Shelton KH, Taylor PJ, Bonner A, Van den Bree M. *Risk factors for homelessness: Evidence from a population-based study*. *Psychiatry Services*, 2009 Apr;60(4): 465–72.

