

Family Homelessness in DC

On January 25, 2012, 3,187 persons in families throughout the District of Columbia indicated that they were homeless. As the recession firmly settled into our nation's capital, more and more families are becoming homeless every day. In the last five years, family homelessness in the District has risen 74% (Washington Post, 2012)

It is estimated that these families include 1,880 children who have lost their home, safety, and sense of security as a result of their families' experience (Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, 2012).

The Hard Facts

- More than 15,000 people are homeless in DC over the course of a typical year, one of the highest rates of homelessness in the country (Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless, 2012)
- As of January 2012, there were 1,014 homeless families in DC, representing 54% of the total homeless population (up 46% between 2008 and 2011, up an additional 19% between 2011 and 2012)(Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless, 2012)
- 30% of DC children under 18 live at or below the poverty line, which is \$22,000 for a family of four. The poverty rate for all DC residents increased in 2010 to 19.9%, **the third highest poverty rate in the nation** (Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless, 2012).

The Struggle to Find Affordable Housing

In the District, a worker earning minimum wage (\$8.25/hour) must work approximately 140 hours per week, 52 weeks a year, to afford a 2-bedroom apartment at fair market rent (\$1,506/month). The wage a full time worker must earn to afford housing in DC is \$28.96 per hour. Since the year 2000, the number of low-cost rental units in DC has dropped by 50%

80% of extremely low income residents of DC, and almost half of all DC households, pay more than 30% of their income for rent. The typical low-income household spends almost 70% of their income on housing (Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless, 2012).

Between the lack of affordable housing solutions and the other factors that lead to homelessness, it is no wonder that 5,611 persons in families were reported to be homeless in the metropolitan Washington region as of January 2012 (Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, 2012).

Other Common Factors that lead to Family Homelessness:

- Sudden emergency or crisis (i.e. no sick leave or inadequate health care, fire, family conflict, etc.)
- Job Market: In September, 2012, the unemployment rate in Ward 8 of Washington DC stood at 21.9% (Washington Times, 2012)
- Domestic Violence: The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness estimates that 80 percent of mothers with children experiencing homelessness have previously experienced domestic violence (Child Trends, 2012)
- Incarceration, family separation, or loss of breadwinner

Year round, there are only 330 emergency shelter units for families. For most applicants, the wait for emergency family shelter is at least 6 months. In 2011, a total of 1,991 families applied for emergency shelter, yet only a small percentage were placed, with the rest left to fend for themselves (Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, 2012).

