



Vulnerable and Hard-to-Reach Population FACT SHEET: The Homeless

This fact sheet provides information about a population in Florida that is potentially vulnerable and/or hard-to-reach before, during, and after a disaster event. Preparedness requires understanding the demographics and characteristics of these groups in order to best meet the needs of all persons.

Definition

The National Mental Health Information Center defines a homeless individual as a person, who lacks housing, including persons who:

- Live in transitional housing
- Spend most nights in a supervised public or private facility providing temporary living quarters
- Live 'on the street'

Demographics

- According to the 2005 Annual Report of Homeless Conditions in Florida, approximately 83,391 Floridians were homeless on any given night in 2005.
- 228 shelters in Florida have:
 - Over 8,500 emergency beds
 - Over 11,000 transitional housing beds
 - A capacity to house about one-quarter of homeless Floridians temporarily
- Permanent housing opportunities are scarce
- 46% were homeless for less than 3 months
 - 28% were homeless 3 - 12 months
 - 26% were homeless for over 1 year

General Information

Who Are the Homeless?

- 40% are families
- 60% are single adults
- 8% are over 62 years of age
- 23% are children age 18 or younger
- 37% have alcohol and/or drug abuse problems
- 24% are mentally ill
- 26% have both mental illness and substance abuse problems
- 45% had 1 episode of homelessness
- 28% had 4 or more episodes of homelessness

Various Reasons for Homelessness

- Unemployment and/or poverty
- Long-term illness/disability
- Mental illness
- Substance abuse
- Divorce
- Escape from domestic violence and/or child abuse

- Gaps in services, such as:
 - Affordable housing
 - Space in treatment facilities
 - Home loss prevention
- Institutional release (e.g. psychiatric facilities, prisons)
- Disasters/hazards
 - After the 2004 hurricanes, there were nearly 15,000 additional homeless people on the west coast of Florida.

Resources for the Homeless in Florida

- Florida Department of Children and Families: Office on Homelessness (www.dcf.state.fl.us/homelessness/)
- Florida Coalition for the Homeless (www.flacoalitionhomeless.com)

For More Information

1. Florida Coalition for the Homeless. (n.d.). *FAQ's*. Retrieved March 7, 2006, from www.flacoalitionhomeless.com/faqs.htm.
1. Florida Coalition for the Homeless. (n.d.). *Florida Coalition for the Homeless*. Retrieved March 7, 2006, from www.flacoalitionhomeless.com.
2. Florida Department of Children and Families: Office on Homelessness. (2006). *Office on Homeless*. Retrieved October 18, 2006, from www.dcf.state.fl.us/homelessness/.
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5. US Department of Health and Human Services – Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): National Mental Health Information Center. (n.d.). *Healthy People 2010 – Conference Edition, Chapter 18 Mental Health and Mental Disorders: Terminology*. Retrieved March 7, 2006, from www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/features/hp2010/terminology.asp.

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