

Homelessness Fact Sheet

2010

Homelessness is not about the failure of the homeless. It is about the failure of systems - the education system - the healthcare system - the criminal justice system. These failures are etched on the faces of our fragile neighbors as we pass them by, embarrassed, and not knowing what to say or do.

Father Stephen V. Sundborg, S.J., President, Seattle University

Who is homeless in our county?

Homelessness affects all segments of the population, including children. Among households living in emergency shelter and transitional housing programs.

- 55% are families with children.
- 33% are single adult men.
- 11% are single adult women.
- 34% of the total number of people living in county shelters are children aged 0-17.
- 64% of the homeless in King County are people of color.

What is the solution? The solution to homelessness is appropriate housing for every person. Appropriate housing is safe, affordable, accessible, and connected to needed support services. This task goes beyond charitable donations. Ending homelessness must become a top priority for all levels of government and the entire community.

What dangers are the homeless faced with? Violence, exposure to the elements, communicable diseases and infections are greater threats to those living without homes.

How many people are homeless in this area? During the 2010 One Night Count, **8,937** homeless individuals were counted in King County. **6,178** of these people were found in shelters and transitional programs. **2,759** people were surviving outdoors. We know there are hundreds more homeless individuals throughout Seattle and King County who were not counted they were hidden from sight.

What does homelessness cost our community? Homelessness leads to loss of education, productivity and quality of life. It also leads to costly health care, public safety, and criminal justice expenses. Our community now *saves* \$3.2 million a year in emergency social and health programs by providing supportive housing for 160 formerly homeless people.

Why the homeless population increasing? The rising cost of living and lack of affordable housing in King County are contributing factors to homelessness. Additional causes are lack of health insurance, domestic violence, addiction, mental illness, disability and chronic disease.

What is affordable housing?

Housing is considered affordable if it costs 30% or less of a family's income. Less than 1% of apartments in King County are affordable to households earning less than 30% of median income (\$25300 for a family of 4).

2010 Fair Market Rent in King County Sources of income

\$770/month for an efficiency apt.

\$603/month: SSI Disability

\$878/month for a 1-bedroom

\$546/month: TANF (formerly welfare) grant for a family of 3

\$1,056/month for 2-bedroom

\$1,291: monthly minimum wage salary before taxes

\$1,492/month for 3-bedroom

**Fair Market Rent is the amount of money that a given property would command, if it were open for leasing at the moment .*

What does our faith have to say about this issue? Catholic Social Teaching states that the measure of every society is how well it protects the life and dignity of the human person. Addressing the United Nations, Pope John Paul II cited "the right to food, clothing, housing, sufficient health care, rest, and leisure" as fundamental human rights. We at St. James are charged to fulfill this gospel message by seeking the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

What can I do? Help build the political will to end homelessness by joining the St. James Housing Action Network. For more information, contact Suzanne Lee, Pastoral Assistant for Social Outreach, at 206-654-4640 or slee@stjames-cathedral.org.

Sources: Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness, Seattle PI, United Way, FAITH, DSHS, Washington State Department of Housing and Urban Development, The Challenge and Spirituality of Catholic Social Teaching, Plymouth Housing Group, National Health Care for the Homeless Council, and National Coalition for the Homeless.