Activity \#1
Basic Facts About Homelessness
Handout Masters

## Basic Facts Abour Homelessness

## Ape YOU 解

At one time or another, you may have wondered how people lose their homes and what it's like not to have a home.


Answer the questions below as thoughtfully as possible. As you answer them, keep in mind that this is not a test. Your answers won't be graded. It's just a way for you to find out what you already know about homeless issues.

1. How do U.S. and Texas laws determine that a kid is in a homeless situation?
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2. a. Every night in the U.S., about how many people experience homelessness?
b. Over the course of a year, about how many million people become homeless?
c. True or False: Single-parent families and homeless youth are among the fastest growing subsets of the nation's homeless population. $\qquad$
d. Yes or No: Is homelessness a significant problem in America?
3. What are 10 common reasons that people become homeless?
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14. Why don't homeless people just live with family members?
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15. What is the current hourly minimum wage (before taxes or any other deductions)?
16. The federal government says housing is "affordable" when a people pay no more than a certain percentage of their income on housing. What is that percentage?
17. Why don't homeless people just get jobs and earn money to pay for a place to live?
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The following questions focus on kids without homes. You probably know some of these kids, or at least see them every day. However you may not know that they are experiencing homelessness because they don't often tell people.

8. An estimated 1.3 million young people are in the street each night.
9. Children and older kids become homeless because the adults who care for them are too lazy to work.
10. Kids who choose to be homeless rather than live with their parents are just being rebellious.
11. Teens in foster homes are at increased risk of experiencing homelessness.


FALSE
12. Non-judgmental assistance is available for kids without homes.

FALSE

## Basic Facts $\mathrm{AbO}_{4 \times}$ HOMELESSNESS Now You Know



1. How do U.S. and Texas laws determine that a kid is in a homeless situation?

Answer: The federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and similar laws in Texas say that kids are in a homeless situation when they don't have a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This definition includes:

- kids who are:
- sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
- living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings;
- living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals;
- awaiting foster care placement
- kids who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
- migratory children only if they are living in circumstances described above.

2. a. Every night in the U.S., about how many people experience homelessness?

Answer: 750,000
b. Over the course of a year, about how many million people become homeless?

Answer: Between 2.5 and 3.5 million
c. True or False: Single-parent families and homeless youth are among the fastest growing subsets of the nation's homeless population.
Answer: True
d. Is homelessness a significant problem in America?

Answer: Yes
3. What are 10 common reasons that people become homeless?

Answer:

1. The family has no insurance to cover major damage to their home due to a fire or a natural disaster, such as a hurricane, a tornado, an earthquake, or a flood.
2. The person whose income supports the family loses a job.
3. The person who supports the family has a job that requires a car. The car is necessary not only to get to and from work but also to go from place to place during the day. The car breaks down and the family can't afford to fix it or buy another one. The person has to quit that job and look for a job that doesn't require a car.
4. A full-time job on which the family depends to make ends meet becomes a parttime job.
5. The family's income doesn't keep up with basic cost-of-living expenses.
6. The family gets behind on monthly payments (such as rent, utilities, loans, credit cards), so that it's not possible to make all the minimum payments.
7. The family has an unplanned major expense, such as a trip because of a family emergency.
8. The family has no health coverage or hospitalization plan to cover bills when one of them has surgery, a major injury, or a serious illness.
9. A family member spends all the money on an addiction to alcohol or drugs.
10. The family has to pay for long-term care for a family member or close relative.

Here are four typical examples of families who could easily become homeless:

## Scenario \#1

Joe and Carol have two children. Joe makes $\$ 7$ an hour washing and detailing vehicles at a car dealership. The family was living in a mobile home until it was flooded out two days ago during a major hurricane. The mobile home was paid for, but they didn't have insurance, so it's a total loss. Joe and Carol don't have any relatives living nearby, but they want to stay in the area because of Joe's job.

## Scenario \#2

Alex is a pharmaceuticals sales rep who makes nearly \$100,000 a year. His wife, Brenda, is a high school graduate who spends her afternoons doing volunteer work for several local charities. Last year, Alex and Brenda purchased a new home in an exclusive neighborhood. Alex drives a new Lexus 4-door sedan; and Brenda drives a new Lexus SUV. They are paying for both vehicles on 48-month payment plans. They are also making monthly payments on the cars they bought for their twin daughters, who turned 16 two months ago. Last week, Alex had a major stroke. His physical therapist says that it will be a long time before Alex can walk without assistance. His doctor says he may never be able to drive again because his vision and coordination were affected by the stroke.

## Scenario \#3

Thomas and Marie have four young children. Thomas has a minimum wage job working as a janitor for a large insurance company. He works from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m.
and uses the local transit to go to and from work. Last year, Thomas and Marie moved in with his mother, Margaret, because she was no longer able to look after herself. Every day, Marie assists Margaret with physical tasks, prepares her meals, and helps her bathe and dress. Thomas and Marie don't pay rent, but they do pay the utility bill and buy groceries to feed everyone in the house. Last week, Margaret told Thomas and Marie that they would have to find another place to live because the four kids were getting on her nerves.

## Scenario \#4

Traci is a single mom with two small children. She and the kids live in a rental home with Traci’s grandmother, who receives $\$ 235$ a month from Social Security. Traci dropped out of high school but is now working studying at home to get her GED. Traci works 30 hours a week at a Chinese restaurant, where she makes $\$ 8$ an hour including tips. She pays her Grandmother $\$ 100$ a week to look after Barry and Sean while she is working. Last week, the landlord told Traci's grandmother to move out as soon as possible because he wants to give the house to his son, who will be getting married next week. Traci and her grandmother don't have any savings are don't know where they will find the funds to cover the costs of moving into a new place.
4. Why don't homeless people just live with family members?

Answer: Sometimes they do. But they are still considered homeless if they are "doubling up" with family or friends because of the situation.

Families who are doubling up with friends or relatives because they have no other housing options are considered homeless under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. The Act recognizes that doubling up is a temporary situation, one that is often prohibited by public housing laws and landlords. If the extra family were discovered, both families would likely be evicted. Moreover, doubled-up friends or families often impose space and financial burdens on the host family, and the guests are often asked to leave after a short time.

Also, keep in mind that many people in homeless situations are fleeing from domestic violence and abuse. In addition, people who are exiting the criminal justice system, mental health facilities, foster care and other long-term care arrangements, do not have families to whom they can return home.
5. What is the current hourly minimum wage (before taxes or any other deductions)?

Answer: \$5.15 an hour
The minimum wage is defined as the lowest wage, determined by law or contract, that an employer may pay an employee for a specified job.

Most states also have established a minimum wage for their workers. No state's minimum wage can be less than the federal minimum wage but it can be more.
6. The federal government says housing is "affordable" when a people pay no more than a certain percentage of their income on housing. What is that percentage?

Answer: The federal government says that affordable housing is housing that costs no more than $\mathbf{3 0 \%}$ of a person's income.

The U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) says:
The lack of affordable housing is a significant hardship for low-income households preventing them from meeting their other basic needs, such as nutrition and healthcare, or saving for their future and that of their families.

An estimated 12 million renter and homeowner households now pay more than 50 percent of their annual incomes for housing, and a family with one full-time worker earning the minimum wage cannot afford the local fair-market rent for a two-bedroom apartment anywhere in the United States.

Source: www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/affordablehousing/index.cfm
This is one reason that people concerned about the limited availability of "affordable housing" are urging the federal government to raise the minimum wage until it is truly a "living wage." A "living wage" is defined as an hourly wage that enables a person working 40 hours a week, with no additional income, to afford food, housing, utilities, health care, transportation, and a certain amount of recreation.

7. Why don't homeless people just get jobs and earn money to pay for a place to live? Answer: Many people experiencing homelessness work every day but do not earn enough income to pay for housing. Using the government's "no more than $30 \%$ " definition of affordable housing, a minimum wage worker would have to work 114 hours a week to afford a two-bedroom apartment that cost no more than $30 \%$ of his or her income. Even two people working 40 hours a week at the minimum wage would have to spend more than $30 \%$ of their combined income to rent a two-bedroom apartment.

Now let's focus on kids without homes because you probably know some of these kids, or at least see them every day. However you may not know that they are experiencing homelessness because they often hesitate to
 tell people.
8. An estimated 1.3 million young people are in the street each night.

Answer: True
Homeless youth are among the fastest growing subsets of the nation's homeless population.
9. Children and older kids become homeless because the adults who care for them are too lazy to work.
Answer: False
There are many people who work every day of the week but do not make enough money for rent and bills. There is no place in the United States where a minimum wage job provides enough income to afford a two-bedroom home.
10. Kids who choose to be homeless rather than live with their parents are just being rebellious.
Answer: False
In reality, youth sometimes leave home to escape domestic violence or physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or because their families cannot accept their sexual orientation or parenting status.
11. Teens in foster homes are at increased risk of experiencing homelessness.

Answer: True
Some youth are homeless because at age 18 they "age out" of the foster care system without having been prepared to make a successful transition to adulthood. Many leave without knowing basic skills like how to prepare meals, how to balance a checkbook, or how to apply for a job.
12. Non-judgmental assistance is available for kids without homes.

Answer: True
Assistance is definitely available for kids experiencing homelessness. In addition to your school district's homeless education liaison and numerous social service agencies, there are confidential, toll-free hotlines and help lines for kids without homes and kids who have run away. Several resources are listed on the next page.

| Name | Toll-Free Number | Web Site I Additional Information |
| :--- | :--- | :--- |
| Texas Runaway <br> Hotline | $1-888-580-4357$ <br> $(1-888-580-H E L P)$ <br> Español también | www.texasrunaway.org/ <br> Besides staff and volunteers who care, the <br> hotline has a database with more than 2,000 <br> listings for community services throughout <br> Texas. If you've run away and are ready to <br> go home, these folks can help you access a <br> free transportation service called Operation <br> Home Free. |
| National Runaway <br> Switchboard | $1-800-621-786-2929$ <br> $(1-800-$ RUNAWAY) <br> Español también <br> TDD: <br> $1-800-621-0394$ | www.nrscrisisline.org/ <br> Non-judgmental, confidential crisis <br> intervention and local and national referrals <br> through a 24-hour hotline for youth and <br> their families. Can act as a message center <br> between kids and parents and also arrange <br> conference calls. Free transportation home. <br> No caller ID. |
| Covenant House / <br> Nineline | $1-800-999-9999$ <br> Español también <br> TTY: <br> $1-800-999-9915 ~$ | www.nineline.org/ <br> National hotline with information and <br> referrals for kids under 21 who are in <br> homeless situations, who have run away, or <br> have other troubles. Web site has email <br> option for kids who would rather email than <br> talk. |
| Children of the Night | $1-800-551-1300$ | www.childrenofthenight.org/ <br> A runaway/crisis hotline you don't have to <br> be running away to call, talk 24 hours a day <br> about anything. If they can't help, they will <br> refer you to someone who can. |

Questions and answers adapted from the Teacher's Guide of the National Runaway Switchboard's Runaway Prevention Curriculum at www.nrscrisisline.org/teacherguide1.pdf, and from the Homeless to Harvard curriculum at www.endhomelessness.org/pub/Lifetime_ans.pdf
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## Hard Times in



Imagine that your mother's friend, Marie, wants to move to Texas, but she isn't sure whether to live in Temple, Waco, or a small rural community. Marie has a 14-month old daughter named Ellie. Let's see what her monthly expenses would be in each area she is considering.

Monthly Expenses for One Parent, One Young Child in Texas

| Monthly Expenses | In the Killeen- <br> Temple Area <br> (\$) | In the <br> Waco Area <br> (\$) | In Rural Areas <br> of Texas <br> (\$) |
| :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Housing including utilities | 522 | 495 | 396 |
| Food | 230 | 230 | 230 |
| Child care | 316 | 316 | 316 |
| Transportation | 148 | 158 | 197 |
| Health care | 241 | 241 | 241 |
| Other necessities | 233 | 225 | 194 |
| Taxes | $\mathbf{9 2}$ | 76 | $\mathbf{1 8}$ |
| Totals: |  |  |  |

Source: Basic Family Budget Calculator at www.epi.org/content.cfm/datazone_fambud_budget

1. Let's see what Marie's monthly and yearly expenses would be in the three areas she is considering. Add up the three columns in the chart above and enter the totals in the Monthly Expenses column below. Then compute the Annual Expenses.

|  | Monthly <br> Expenses (\$) |  | Annual <br> Expenses (\$) |
| :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| a. In the Killeen-Temple area |  | $\mathrm{x} 12=$ |  |
| b. In the Waco area |  | $\mathrm{x} 12=$ |  |
| c. In a rural area of Texas |  | $\mathrm{x} 12=$ |  |

2. Now let's look at Marie's income.
a. Marie is currently working full-time for the minimum wage. That means she is making how much per hour?

A person working 40-hours a week works $\mathbf{2 , 0 8 0}$ hours per year.
b. Therefore, what would Marie's annual earnings be, working full-time at a minimum wage job?
3. Because she doesn't have a lot of work experience, Marie expects to continue working for the minimum wage if she moves to Texas.

Looking at the annual expenses you calculated on page 1, can Marie afford to live in:
a. the Killeen-Temple area? $\qquad$
b. the Waco area? $\qquad$
c. a rural area of Texas?
4. To meet the annual expenses of living in a rural area of Texas, what would Marie's annual earnings have to be? $\qquad$
5. Working 40 hours a week, how much would Marie have to earn per hour to meet those expenses?
(Hint: Divide the annual amount by 2,080 ). $\qquad$
6. Going back to the expense chart on page 1 , do you think any of those expenses could be reduced or eliminated? If so, explain.
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7. What would you list under "other necessities"?
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Activity \#3
Living on the Bottom Line
Handout Masters

## Living on the Bottom Line

Below is a list of items that many people want or need when they live on their own.

1. Work with your team to decide which expenses you want or need.
2. Decide who will be responsible for determining costs for each item the team wants or needs.
3. Put that person's initials to the left of the item.
4. Make sure each expense on your list has someone responsible for it.

## Notes:

- Be aware that looking at rental listings in the local paper and/or making a few phone calls may be necessary to determine realistic rent and utilities for an efficiency apartment and a one-bedroom apartment in an area where a young person just starting out would be likely to live.
- Calculating Once-a-Year Expenses: For items such as an apartment deposit or a vehicle registration, divide the annual cost by 12 .

5. Before your team meets again, fill in the expenses for which you are responsible. Note: Don't enter a figure for Total Expenses. Your team will determine the total when they meet again.

Hint: It's probably best to use a pencil to enter budget amounts so you can change them if you need to.

| Who? | Monthly Costs / Expenses for One | Expense (\$) |
| :--- | :--- | :--- |
|  | Rent on an efficiency or one-bedroom apartment (including up-front cost <br> to move into an apartment (security deposit, cleaning deposit, pet deposit <br> if you have a pet) |  |
|  | Utilities (electricity, gas, water) |  |
|  | Basic food items |  |
|  | Snacks and party foods |  |
|  | Household supplies (toilet paper, laundry soap, cleaning supplies, etc.) |  |
|  | Personal care, hygiene items (soap, shampoo, toothbrush, etc.) |  |


| Who? | Monthly Costs / Expenses for One | Expense (\$) |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | Car payment |  |
|  | Car insurance, registration, inspection |  |
|  | Gas, car maintenance, and repair |  |
|  | Other types of transportation (bus, taxi) |  |
|  | Telephone (land line, cell phone) |  |
|  | Television (basic cable service) |  |
|  | Internet hook-up |  |
|  | Computer supplies (paper, disks) |  |
|  | Childcare, baby sitter |  |
|  | Diapers, formula, other baby supplies |  |
|  | Medical and dental visits |  |
|  | Prescription and over-the-counter drugs |  |
|  | Yard care and supplies |  |
|  | Toys, books, CDs, videos, electronic games |  |
|  | Recreation, entertainment, special events, vacations trip |  |
|  | Pet food and supplies |  |
|  | Financial assistance for adult family member(s) |  |
|  | Payments on credit cards, debts, loans other than house, car, or insurance). |  |
|  | Savings |  |
|  | Donations to charities, religious organizations |  |
|  | Gifts for family, friends, work associates; cards, gift wrap |  |
| Team | Total Expenses for One: |  |

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## Directions

1. Meet with your team and go over each budget item on the worksheets for Living on the Bottom Line.
2. Work with you team to determine a realistic figure for each expense and record that figure on your worksheet.
3. Add up all the expenses and enter the total on your worksheet.

How much do you need to meet monthly expenses?
Keep in mind that these expenses come out of your NET income (take-home pay after various payroll deductions for taxes, employee benefits, etc.).

To see how much you need to make before the payroll deductions, work with your team to compute your GROSS earnings.

To compute your monthly gross income, multiply the total expenses you entered on line A by 1.20. (Dong this will add $20 \%$ to your net wages.) Enter the monthly gross income you need on line B.

To compute your annual gross income, multiply the amount on line B by 12. Enter your annual gross income on line C.

A person working full-time (40 hours per week) works 2,080 hours per year. Therefore, to determine your gross hourly wage, divide your annual gross income on line C by 2,080. Enter the hourly gross wage you'll need to pay your expenses on line D.

Enter the (gross) hourly minimum wage in America (and Texas) on line E .

Calculate the monthly gross earnings of someone working full-time at a minimum wage job, by multiplying the amount on line E by 2,080 . Divide the answer by 12. Enter the monthly minimum wage gross on line F.

Compare the monthly gross income you need (line B) with the monthly gross income of someone working full-time at a minimum wage job (line F).

Would a person working full-time at a minimum wage job be able to pay all the expenses you listed for yourself?
A. $\qquad$
B. $\qquad$
C. $\qquad$
D. $\qquad$
E. $\qquad$
F. $\qquad$

YES NO
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## Easy Pay for Two?

Living on one's own may be more costly than many people realize. Let's see if it's easier for two people to make ends meet.

Let's assume that monthly costs are being shared by Hank and Hannah, a newly married couple with no kids.


1. Copy the costs for one from the Living On the Bottom Line worksheets to the Expenses for Just One column in the chart below.
2. However, be careful to enter costs only for items you think Hank and Hannah would want or need.
3. Use the directions in the third column to adjust, as needed, the expenses for one so that they meet the expenses for two.
4. Work with your team to add up Hank and Hannah's expenses and enter the total in the last box on page 2.

| Monthly Costs / Expenses | $\begin{array}{c}\text { Expenses for } \\ \text { Just One (\$) }\end{array}$ |  | How to Compute Expenses for Two |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |\(\left.\quad \begin{array}{c}Expenses <br>

for Two (\$)\end{array}\right]\)

| Monthly Costs / Expenses | Expenses for <br> Just One (\$) | How to Compute Expenses for Two | Expenses <br> for Two (\$) |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| Furniture, household items (bedding, <br> towels, food preparation and storage items, <br> dishware and eating utensils, iron, clock, <br> broom, hangers, etc.) |  | Increase one person's expense by 5\%. |  |
| Car payment (for one car) |  | No change. |  |
| Car insurance, registration, inspection |  | No change. |  |
| Gas, car maintenance, and repair | Increase one person's expense by 20\% to cover more errands <br> and trips. |  |  |
| Other types of transportation (bus, taxi) |  | Enter cost monthly transit pass <br> 50 one-way trips for Hannah. |  |
| Telephone (land line, cell phone) | Land line: Increase one person's expense by 10\% to cover <br> additional long distance calls. <br> Cell phone: Increase one person's expense by 25\% to cover a <br> shared plan. |  |  |
| Television (basic cable service) | No change. |  |  |
| Internet hook-up |  | No change. |  |
| Computer supplies (paper, disks) |  | No change. Only one person uses the computer. |  |
| Medical and dental visits | Double one person's expense. |  |  |
| Prescription and over-the-counter drugs |  | Increase one person's expense by 60\%. |  |


| Monthly Costs / Expenses | Expenses for <br> Just One (\$) | How to Compute Expenses for Two | Expenses <br> for Two (\$) |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| Yard care and supplies |  | No change. |  |
| Toys, books, CDs, videos, electronic <br> games |  | Increase one person's expense by $10 \%$. |  |
| Recreation, entertainment, special events, <br> vacations trip |  | Increase one person's expense by 70\%. |  |
| Pet food and supplies | No change. |  |  |
| Financial assistance for adult family <br> member(s) | No change. |  |  |
| Payments on credit cards, debts, loans <br> other than house, car, or insurance) |  | Increase one person's expense by $50 \%$. |  |
| Savings | No change. |  |  |
| Donations to charities, religious <br> organizations | No change. |  |  |
| Gifts for family, friends, work associates; <br> cards, gift wrap |  | Increase one person's expense by $60 \%$. There are more family <br> members, co-workers, and friends to buy gifts for. |  |
| Total Expenses: |  |  |  |

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Enter Hank and Hannah’s total monthly expenses
(from the last column on the Easy Pay for Two? worksheet)
A.

## In calculating your answers for items B-D below, assume that Hank and Hannah have full-time, minimum wage jobs.

## Enter Hank's gross monthly income on line B.

B. $\qquad$
Enter Hannah's gross monthly income on line C.
C. $\qquad$
Enter Hank and Hannah's combined gross monthly income on line D.
D. $\qquad$
As we saw earlier, most employers withhold $20 \%$ of gross wages for taxes and other deductions. The remaining $80 \%$ is the net income, which people use to pay their living expenses.

Enter the couple's combined net monthly income on line E.
E. $\qquad$
Compare the amount you entered on line E with the amount you entered on line A.

Do Hank and Hannah have enough money to cover their monthly expenses? YES NO
If you answered "NO":

1. Work with your team to revise or eliminate costs you listed in the Expenses for Two column on your Easy Pay for Two? worksheet. (Do not erase your original figures. Just draw a line through them.)
2. Write the revised expense below or next to the amount you crossed through.
3. Continue revising expenses until the total of all the items is no greater than the combined net income you entered on line E.

Activity \#7
Summing Up
Handout Master


1. Based on your experience with low-income budgeting activities, do you think that-even with public assistance-a single parent with one or more children would have difficulty making ends meet with a full-time, minimum wage job?


YES NO
Briefly explain your reasoning.
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2. How do you think losing your home would affect your thoughts, your feelings, your schoolwork, your social life, and your behavior? List words that come to mind.
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Activity \#8
End Homelessness! A Fact Sheet for Concerned Students
Handout Masters

## End Homelessness! A Fact Sheet for Concerned Students

This fact sheet is available at: www.endhomelessness.org/pub/factsheets/Ushigh.pdf


# Certificate of Appreciation 

in recognition of your participation in activities to understand and ease the difficulties experienced by people in homeless situations.

## Certificate of Appreciation awarded to

in recognition of your participation in activities to understand and ease the difficulties experienced by people in homeless situations.

