



National Coalition for the Homeless

2201 P. St. NW Washington, DC 20037

Phone: (202) 462-4822 Fax: (202) 462-4823

Email: info@nationalhomeless.org | Website: <http://www.nationalhomeless.org>

Homelessness Fact Sheet for Kindergarten-Second Grade Students

What Does It Mean To Be Homeless?

Most people who live in the United States of America have a home. They live just like we do, in houses or apartments. They have plenty of food to eat and a warm bed to sleep in. But not everybody is like us, some people don't have homes. These people are homeless.

When someone is homeless, they might live outside on the streets or in a shelter with lots of other people. They don't have a place to put all of their belongings so they must carry everything with them in big bags or in a suitcase. Many homeless people do not have enough money for food or new clothes so they are often very hungry.

Why Are People Homeless?

There are lots of reasons why people are homeless. Most of the time, a person is homeless because they do not have enough money to pay for a home. They might work very hard every day of the week and still not have the money to pay for a place for them to live. Some homeless people have families so they have to take care of their children too and that can cost a lot of money. Some homeless people have a disability so they can't take care of themselves or work and make money. Some people are homeless just for a little while; others are homeless for a much longer time, maybe even their whole life.

What Does a Homeless Person Look Like?

Homeless people do not look any different than you or I. It does not matter what color your skin is, where you live, if you are a boy or a girl, or how old you are. Anyone can be homeless. Homeless people are just like us—they grew up with a mom and dad, brothers, sisters, and friends. Some even went to elementary school just like you and learned some of the same things

Can Only Adults Be Homeless, or are there Homeless Children Too?

Not every homeless person is by themselves. Some homeless people have families and children. These children could look just like you, but they do not live like you do. They do not have a warm bed to sleep in or their own room to play in. They do not have their own toys, and they cannot have friends over to play at their house or have a sleepover. Their lives are very different from yours but they are still kids just like you!

Is There A Way To End Homelessness?

Ending homelessness is a possibility, and many cities and states are working very hard to try and help people find homes. There are a few ways that these places are able to end homelessness.

1. They can build homes that do not cost a lot of money to live in.
2. They can pay people enough money to be able to pay for their house and their food and clothes.
3. They can teach people how to keep their house and how to pay their bills on time.

How Can I Help?

There are so many ways that you can help homeless people. Think about all of the things that you need during the day: breakfast, lunch and dinner, clothes to wear, school supplies. You can donate all of those things to homeless people, because they need those things too.

Go to a local homeless shelter with your family or friends and cook a meal for the people there.

You can also ask your parents to call their Congressman and ask them to support laws that will help end homelessness

The most important way to help homeless people is to treat them just like you would treat your friends or family. Treat homeless people just like you would want to be treated.

Activities for Teachers/Leaders

1. Food/Clothing Drive

Materials Needed: Paper, Markers, Cardboard Box, Number for a Homeless Shelter in your area

Have the kids make a list of all the things that they could give to a homeless person. The list should include clothing, canned goods, books and school supplies. Ask the kids what they use every day and what they think a homeless person might need also.

Send a letter home with each child explaining that your class is having a food/clothing drive and you will be collecting items to donate to a homeless shelter. Have the kids bring in items throughout the week and put them in a cardboard box.

Bring the box to a local homeless shelter or food bank and drop off the items

2. A Happy Home

Materials Needed: Paper, Markers

Have the kids draw a picture of a family without a home, and then draw a picture of the same family in a new home with all the things that the students think is important to have in a house.

3. Story Time

Read a story about homelessness to the children and ask them their reactions about the book and some of the things that they learned.

Options include:

Fly Away Home by Eve Bunting

Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen by Dyanne Disalvo Ryan

4. Additional Resources

Additional lesson plans and ideas for programming can be found at:
http://staffweb.esc12.net/~mbooth/homeless_education_service/homeless_education_service_homepage.htm

5. Additional Information

For more information about the issues of homelessness please visit www.nationalhomeless.org, the National Coalition for the Homeless website. There are additional fact sheets about a variety of issues and statistics that can be used as other resources.

Sources: National Alliance to End Homelessness, Homelessness Fact Sheet for Kindergarten-Second Graders, www.endhomelessness.org

Rebecca Ratner
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