

Understanding the Realities of Homelessness

There is no single cause for homelessness. Homelessness is the result of several factors that when combined hinder the individual's ability to maintain stability and function in society. You likely know someone in your immediate family that has one or two factors on the list, but the homeless usually have three or more of these factors. The fifteen factors include:

Severe Trauma- A history of sexual abuse, combat, catastrophic loss of family or a similar traumatic event

Mental Illness- Severe and persistent mental illness, such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder

Educational Deficiencies- The inability to read or write, the lack of basic academic skills or no high school diploma or equivalent

Addiction- Drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling and other addictions

Severe Family Dysfunction- Abusive parents, broken homes, multiple residences or caregivers

No Family or Significant Support- Total lack of family or support systems due to death, alienation or institutional childhood

Learning Disabilities- Dyslexia, ADD and other disorders which interfere with education and life functioning

Developmental Disabilities- Low IQ or head injury that hinders intellectual functioning

Criminal History- The existence of a criminal record that seriously limits opportunity

Limited Occupational Skill Set- The inability to do anything beyond that most basic manual labor

Transportation Deficiencies- The inability to purchase, maintain, insure or legally drive a car or obtain transportation through public or private means

Life Skill Deficiency- The inability to manage the most basic life functions such as hygiene, housing, transportation, finance and relationships

Prior Institutionalization- An extended stay in foster care, juvenile institutions, mental hospitals, prison or other institutions

Generational Poverty- two or more generations dependent on public assistance or charity for basic living needs that has fostered an attitude of hopelessness

Physical Disability- Profound injuries, illness or birth defects or socially debilitating physical traits such as disfigurement, tooth loss, or obesity



Homeless mothers and their children generally face multiple barriers to entering the mainstream of society. Sheffield Place provides real solutions to family homelessness by empowering homeless, mother-led families to heal from the trauma of their lives and become self-sufficient.

Source: Junior League of Kansas City, Missouri, *Inside Scoop*, Winter 2014.