

# SURVEYS OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

## DEFINITIONS

### DEFINITION OF HOMELESS

In general, a person is considered homeless if, without HUD assistance, he or she would have to spend the night in a homeless shelter or in a place not meant for human habitation. More specifically, an individual is considered homeless if he or she is

- sleeping in an emergency shelter;
- sleeping in places not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, or abandoned or condemned buildings;
- spending a short time (30 consecutive days or less) in a hospital or other institution, but ordinarily sleeping in the types of places mentioned above;
- living in transitional/supportive housing but having come from streets or emergency shelters;
- being evicted within a week from a private dwelling unit and having no subsequent residence identified and lacking the resources and support networks needed to obtain access to housing; or
- being discharged from an institution and having no subsequent residence identified and lacking the resources and support networks needed to obtain access to housing.

### DEFINITION OF DISABILITY

Federal laws define a person with a disability as "Any person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; has a record of such impairment; or is regarded as having such an impairment."

In general, a physical or mental impairment includes hearing, mobility and visual impairments, chronic alcoholism, chronic mental illness, AIDS, AIDS Related Complex, and mental retardation that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Major life activities include walking, talking, hearing, seeing, breathing, learning, performing manual tasks, and caring for oneself.

#### Details on Disability

- 1) A person shall be considered to have a disability if such person has a physical, mental, or emotional impairment, which is expected to be of long-continued and indefinite duration; substantially impedes his or her ability to live independently; and is of such nature that such ability could be improved by more suitable housing conditions.
- 2) A person will also be considered to have a disability if he or she has a developmental disability, which is a severe, chronic disability that is
  - 2a) attributable to a mental or physical impairment or combination of mental and physical impairments;

- 2b) manifested before the person attains age 22;
- 2c) likely to continue indefinitely; and
- 2d) results in substantial functional limitations in three or more of the following areas of major life activity:
- self-care
  - receptive and expressive language;
  - learning;
  - mobility;
  - self-direction;
  - capacity for independent living and economic self-sufficiency; and
  - reflects the person's need for a combination and sequence of special, interdisciplinary, or generic care, treatment, or other services that are of lifelong or extended duration and are individually planned and coordinated

## DEFINITION OF HOUSING

**Permanent supportive housing** (HUD's definition - in terms of their programs): permanent housing for homeless persons with disabilities is another type of supportive housing. Basically, it is long-term community-based housing and supportive services for homeless persons with disabilities. The intent of this type of supportive housing is to enable this special needs population to live as independently as possible in a permanent setting. The supportive services may be provided by the organization managing the housing or coordinated by the applicant and provided by other public or private service agencies.

Other housing related terms include the following:

**Doubled Up:** temporary sharing of a residence as a result of economic or disaster reasons

**Capacity:** the number of beds in a category

**Beds:** the total number of beds for individuals and those contained in family units

**Overflow beds:** the number of beds, mats or spaces or vouches that are made available on a very temporary basis or on a seasonal basis

**Individual beds:** the number of beds serving individuals

**Family Units:** the number of units that the project set-aside for serving families

**Family Beds** the number of beds that are contained in family units

**Shelters:** all emergency shelters and transitional shelters for the homeless, including domestic violence shelters, residential programs for runaway/homeless youth, and any hotel, motel or apartment voucher arrangements paid by a public/private agency because the person or family is homeless.

**Emergency shelter:** any facility, the primary purpose of which is to provide temporary shelter for the homeless in general or for specific populations of the homeless

**Transitional housing:** a type of supportive housing used to facilitate the movement of homeless individuals and families to permanent housing. Basically, it is housing in which homeless persons live for up to 24 months and receive supportive services that enable them to live more independently. The supportive services may be provided by the organization managing the housing or coordinated by them and provided by other public or private agencies. Transitional housing can be provided in one structure or several structures, at one site or in multiple structures at scattered sites.

**Unsheltered:** Places not meant for human habitation include streets, parks, alleys, parking ramps, part of the highway system, transportation depots, all night commercial establishments, abandoned buildings, marginal motels/hotels which are not normally operational, farm outbuilding and other similar places.

## DEFINITIONS RELATED TO PEOPLE

**Adult:** person 18 or older

**Youth:** an unaccompanied person less than 18 years of age. Children in families do not qualify as youth.

**Homeless Families with Children:** This is a Family Household. Example: "the Jones Family"

**Persons in Homeless Families with Children:** These are the members of the household. Example: "There are six people in the Jones Family."

**Chronic Homeless:** refers to an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more OR has had at least four (4) episodes\* of homeless in the past three (3) years. To be considered chronically homeless, persons must have been sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation and/or in an emergency shelter during that time.

\* *Episode* is an event that is distinct and separate, though part of a larger series.