

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

2.5

THE NUMBER OF FULL-TIME MINIMUM WAGE JOBS A PERSON WOULD HAVE TO WORK TO AFFORD A TWO BEDROOM UNIT.

Housing is the largest single expense for most families, and it grew increasingly out of reach for many during the Great Recession and the jobless “recovery.” The National Low Income Housing Coalition reports that for every 100 extremely low-income renter households there are only 30 affordable and available rental units.¹

Unstable housing situations and homelessness have dire consequences for children. They disrupt schooling, place great stress on children and families, and if not remedied quickly, can have lifelong consequences on children’s academic achievement and success as adults. Homeless children are more likely to go hungry, with one-third reporting that they skip meals; are more than twice as likely as middle-class children to have moderate to severe and chronic health problems; and are twice as likely to repeat a grade in school, to be expelled or suspended, or to drop out of high school.²

The data below highlight the need for increased availability of affordable housing for families with children and greater access to living wage jobs. Support for families who have been homeless is also needed to help them meet their children’s needs going forward.

According to the most recent data on housing and homelessness:

- Nearly 1.2 million public school students were identified as homeless during the 2011-2012 school year, 73 percent more than before the Great Recession (*see Figure*).³ Forty-one states saw increases in homeless public school students between 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 (*see Table D-1*).
- Seventy-five percent of homeless public school students in 2011-2012 were living “doubled up” with family or friends, 15 percent were in shelters, 6 percent were in hotels or motels, and the remaining 4 percent were unsheltered.³

On a single night in January 2013, 138,149 children were homeless in shelters, transitional housing, or on the streets, making up nearly one quarter (23 percent) of all homeless people counted that night.⁴ Among these homeless children, 6,197 children were unaccompanied and 3,675 were unaccompanied and unsheltered.

In no state could an individual working full-time at the minimum wage afford the fair market rent for a two-bedroom rental unit and still have paid for food, utilities and other necessities in 2013. A person would have needed to work more than two-and-a-half full-time jobs at minimum wage to afford a two-bedroom unit (*see Table D-2*).

Find state data in Housing and Homelessness tables in Appendix.

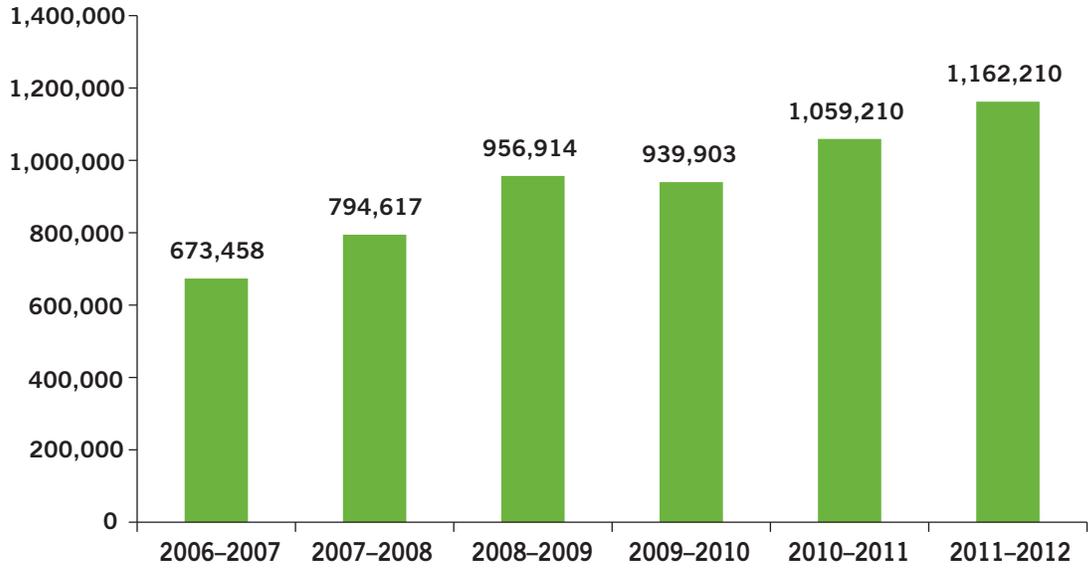
The Floor Was Cold

We laid on blankets. It felt hard. There were little roaches that walked over us at night. One little one got in my ear, and it was hard to take it out. It was nasty, because I could hear it scratching. It hurt a lot when I was trying to sleep. . .

We had to wake up at 5 o’clock in the morning because our school was far away. Sometimes we had to go to school late, because we had to wait for the bathroom. But since it wasn’t our house they could use the bathroom first. But at school, we would get truant. I could not go to recess because of this.

— Kimberly, age 12

Number of Homeless Children Enrolled in Public Schools, 2006–2012



Source: National Center for Homeless Education, 2013.

