



Homelessness

in the United States of America

Most people in the United States have a home. Most people in the United States also have clothes, food, and a bed of their own. But, some people do not have a home. These people are called “homeless.”

A “homeless” person has no safe place to sleep. Homeless people may live in shelters, at a friend’s house, or many places not meant for human living, like the street, in an old building, or in a car. Every night, about 750,000 people do not have a place to live. Some people do not have a home for a short amount of time, but for some people it takes a long time to find a home.

Anybody can be homeless. It does not matter what color your skin is, what religion you are, if you are a boy or a

girl, or if you live in a city or in the country. Homeless people have moms, dads, sisters, brothers, and friends—just like you.

People are homeless because they do not make enough money to pay for a place to live and food, medicine, and clothing. There are people who work everyday of the week and still do not have money for a home.

About half the people who are homeless each year are adults. Sometimes they cannot work or take care of themselves because they have been hurt or were born with a disability. Since they cannot work, they do not have enough money for a home. Many of these people are homeless for a long time, even for their whole lives.

The other half of the people who are homeless each year are families, many with children your age and younger. These children probably have friends and go to school. They, however, do not have a house. They cannot invite their friends over for a sleepover or to play on the weekend. They do not have a phone to talk on with their friends. Also, they often have to switch schools because they move from place to place.

Ending Homelessness is Possible

Cities and states in the United States are starting to end homelessness. They are making plans and starting to move homeless people into homes. There are three ways that cities and states are starting to end homelessness:

- Building homes that do not cost a lot of money.
- Paying people enough money so they can pay their rent, buy food, and pay bills.
- Giving people the information and help they need to keep a home.

Want to know more?

Read and talk about one of these books:

Homeless by Bernard Wolf

Someplace to Go by Maria Testa
and Karen Ritz

A Chance to Grow by E. Sandy Powell

A Rose for Abby by Donna Guthrie

Fly Away Home by Eve Bunting

Home edited by Michael Rosen

The Lady in the Box by Ann McGovern

No Place to Be: Voices of Homeless Children
by Judith Berck

What You Can Do

Help people meet their daily needs. Think about the things that you do everyday and the things you would not be able to live without. Homeless people need many of those same things and you can help them:

- Cook a meal and bring it to people who serve food to homeless people.
- Find out what a homeless program in your community needs most and collect money from your friends, neighbors, and family. Then buy and deliver those items to the program.
- Collect blankets, hats, and gloves for people who are living on the street and deliver these warm items to them.
- Treat homeless people the same way you would treat people who have a home and the same way you would want to be treated.

Tell other people what you have learned. Tell your friends, neighbors, and family what you have learned about homelessness and how to help homeless people. Ask them to do what they can to help stop this problem. Your parents can contact their Congressmen and ask them to vote for laws that help homeless people pay for housing. Your friends can help you make food and collect clothing for homeless people.

National Alliance to End Homelessness

The National Alliance to End Homelessness is a nonpartisan, mission-driven organization committed to preventing and ending homelessness in the United States.

Give a Homeless Family a Home

Draw a picture of a house that you would like to give a homeless family.
Then draw a happy family that is no longer homeless next to that house.