



SLIDE 14.1
TITLE SLIDE

WORKING WITH PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Time: 45 minutes

Slides: 9

Purpose: The material presented within this trainer’s guide provides a framework for content on people experiencing homelessness. Trainers are encouraged to add content to and/or revise this module to tailor the materials to their local jurisdiction and experiences within their community.

Instructor:

This module should be taught by one or two community members who are well-versed in local homeless issues and resources; lived experience with homelessness can be incredibly valuable. If organizations exist in your communities that advocate or assist people experiencing homelessness, it is recommended to have them speak to the class on this topic. If unable to have a guest speaker with lived experience or advocates for homelessness, please consider using the recommended video.

Learning Objectives:

Specific learning objectives will be determined by the content added by local trainers and the primary talking points of guest speakers. Still, upon completing this module, participants should:

1. Be knowledgeable of national and local statistics related to homelessness;
2. Understand the diverse risk factors of homelessness in America; and
3. Identify local resources to support people experiencing homelessness.

Activities:

- Optional Video Activity: “How to Fix America’s Worsening Homelessness Crisis” (10:37)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LduaiX0yj6E>

Additional Materials:

- None



Module Overview 



- National and local statistics
- Risk factors for homelessness in America
- Resources for people experiencing homelessness

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SLIDE 14.2 MODULE OVERVIEW

 **Trainer Note:** Introduce guest speakers (if applicable). Ask them to provide brief introductions including names, titles, and contact information.

Introduce the topics that this module will cover:

- National and local statistics on the prevalence of homelessness and its intersection with behavioral health and justice involvement,
- Risk factors for homelessness in America, and
- Resources for people experiencing homelessness within the community.



National Statistics on People Experiencing Homelessness



- On a single night in 2020, about **580,000 people** experienced homelessness in the U.S. Of those people:
 - 61% experienced **sheltered homelessness**
 - 39% experienced **unsheltered homelessness**
- Homelessness and Behavioral Health
 - About 21% experience serious mental illness
 - About 76% have a current behavioral health condition
- People with marginalized identities, including people of color and people who identify as LGBTQIA+, are more likely to experience homelessness

SLIDE 14.3 NATIONAL STATISTICS ON PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



Trainer Note: Review the national statistics on people experiencing homelessness included on the slide. Emphasize the difficulty in capturing accurate numbers on the prevalence of homelessness. It is likely that the actual rates are much higher than reported by the statistics on the slide. However, these numbers reflect the most recent, available statistics on rates of homelessness in the United States. Use the content note below to support this discussion.



Content Note: The data presented below reflect the most recent, available statistics on rates of *sheltered* AND *unsheltered* homelessness in the United States (2020).

People experiencing **sheltered homelessness** stay in emergency shelters, safe havens, or transitional housing programs. People experiencing **unsheltered homelessness** primarily stay at night in a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a sleeping accommodation for people (e.g., streets, vehicles, parks). On a single night in 2020, about 580,000 people were experiencing homelessness in the U.S., with approximately 61% of this population experiencing sheltered homelessness and 39% experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

Estimates suggest about 21% of the homeless population experience serious mental illness and about 76% have a current behavioral health condition. Approximately 37% of people experiencing homelessness are living with alcohol use disorder and 22% are living with a drug use disorder. Those with marginalized identities, including people of color and those who are LGBTQIA+, are more likely to experience homelessness.



Sources:

- Bianca D. M. Wilson, Soon Kyu Choi, Gary W. Harper, Marguerita Lightfoot, Stephen Russell, and Ilan H. Meyer, May 2020, *Homelessness Among LGBT Adults in the US*, Los Angeles, CA: Williams Institute, retrieved from <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBT-Homelessness-May-2020.pdf>.
- Meghan Henry, Tanya de Sousa, Caroline Roddey, Swati Gayen, and Thomas Joe Bednar, January 2021, *The 2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress Part 1: Point-In-Time Estimates of Homelessness*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development, and Abt Associates, retrieved from <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2020-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>.
- Meghan Henry, Tanya de Sousa, Colette Tano, Nathaniel Dick, Rhaia Hull, Meghan Shea, Tori Morris, and Sean Morris, February 2022, *The 2021 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress Part 1: Point-In-Time Estimates of Sheltered Homelessness*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development, and Abt Associates, retrieved from <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2021-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>.
- National Alliance on Mental Illness, June 2022 [Last Updated], “Mental Health by the Numbers,” <https://www.nami.org/mhstats>.
- Stefan Gutwinski, Stefanie Schreiter, Karl Deutscher, and Seena Fazel, 2021, “The Prevalence of Mental Disorders Among Homeless People in High-Income Countries: An Updated Systematic Review and Meta-regression Analysis,” *PLoS Medicine* 18(8): e1003750.
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, December 15, 2020, *HUD 2020 Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Programs Homeless Populations and Subpopulations*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, retrieved from https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC_PopSub_NatlTerrDC_2020.pdf.

Local Statistics on People Experiencing Homelessness



- Insert local statistics on people experiencing homelessness in your community
- Compare your number to national averages or other communities similar to yours
- Include other relevant statistics on justice involvement for homeless populations



SLIDE 14.4 LOCAL STATISTICS ON PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

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Trainer Note: Tailor this slide with local statistics on your community's population that is experiencing homelessness. Lead a brief discussion based on these numbers. Examples of local statistics to discuss may include:

- Rates of sheltered and unsheltered homelessness,
- Characteristics of the population experiencing homelessness,
- Changes in the population experiencing homelessness over time, and/or
- Geographic locations of unsheltered homeless populations/encampments/calls for service (if available).

If available, include local statistics on justice involvement and homelessness, including:

- How many individuals were experiencing homelessness at admission and/or don't have stable housing identified at release;
- Results of any community data matching that has been done to identify "familiar faces" among law enforcement, jail, homeless, and behavioral health service providers; and
- Other available quantitative/qualitative data from law enforcement and social service partners on interactions with people experiencing homelessness that includes their history of justice involvement.



Types of Homelessness



- **Transitional** – experiencing homelessness for a short period of time (and typically only once)
- **Episodic** – experiencing homelessness frequently for short periods of time
- **Chronic** – experiencing homelessness for long periods of time (one year or more) or experiencing at least 12 months of homelessness across several periods in the past three years

SLIDE 14.5 TYPES OF HOMELESSNESS



Trainer Note: Describe each type of homelessness, using the content note below as a reference point. Connect this typology to local statistics and individuals experiencing homelessness that officers interact with.

Emphasize that, although an individual may experience homelessness, it is not necessarily a permanent label. Although transitional homelessness is more common, individuals who experience episodic and chronic homelessness account for a greater proportion of service use, resulting in interventions targeted at their needs.



Content Note: Experiences with homelessness are typically organized into three types based on the frequency and duration of the experience: transitional, episodic, and chronic.

Transitional homelessness refers to individuals and families who experience homelessness for a short period and typically only once. Transitional homelessness is low in frequency and short in duration. Most people who experience homelessness experience transitional homelessness.

Episodic homelessness refers to individuals who frequently enter and exit homelessness. Episodic homelessness is high in frequency and short in duration.

Chronic homelessness refers to individuals who are likely to be entrenched in the shelter system. Chronic homelessness is low in frequency and long in duration. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, an individual who experiences chronic homelessness has a disability and has experienced homelessness continuously for one year or more or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years where a combined length of time exceeds 12 months. In 2020, just over one-quarter of individuals experiencing homelessness had patterns of chronic homelessness.



Sources:

Meghan Henry, Tanya de Sousa, Caroline Roddey, Swati Gayen, and Thomas Joe Bednar, January 2021, *The 2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress Part 1: Point-In-Time Estimates of Homelessness*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development, and Abt Associates, retrieved from <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2020-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>.

Randall Kuhn, and Dennis P. Culhane, 1998, "Applying Cluster Analysis to Test a Typology of Homelessness by Pattern of Shelter Utilization: Results from the Analysis of Administrative Data," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 26(2): 207–232.

Stefan G. Kertesz, Mary Jo Larson, Nicholas J. Horton, Michael Winter, Richard Saitz, Jeffrey H. Samet, 2005, Homeless Chronicity and Health-Related Quality of Life Trajectories Among Adults with Addictions, *Medical Care* 43(6): 574–585.

Tim Aubry, Susan Farrell, Stephen W. Hwang, and Melissa Calhoun, 2013, "Identifying the Patterns of Emergency Shelter Stays of Single Individuals in Canadian Cities of Different Sizes," *Housing Studies* 28(6): 910–927.



Risk Factors for Homelessness



Homelessness is often a product of many different factors, which may include:

- Lack of affordable housing
- Unemployment
- Prior incarceration or justice system involvement
- Substance use disorder
- Mental health conditions
- Trauma, including adverse childhood experiences (ACES), prior military service, etc.

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SLIDE 14.6

RISK FACTORS FOR HOMELESSNESS



Trainer Note: This slide is meant to illustrate the risk factors for homelessness. Emphasize that homelessness is not just about not having a place to live; it is much more complicated due to many societal factors, including a lack of affordable housing and gentrification. Highlight each risk factor listed on the slide, using the content below as a reference point.



Content Note: Risk factors are certain characteristics that increase the likelihood that an individual or family will experience homelessness. It is important to remember that vulnerability to homelessness is not typically caused by one factor alone, but is often a product of many factors, including demographic, economic, familial, personal, and situational circumstances. The experience of being homeless can be complicated by mental health conditions, substance use, IDD, and/or having limited access to support systems.

Risk Factors for Homelessness:

- Lack of affordable housing
- Unemployment
- Prior incarceration/justice system involvement
- Substance use disorder – It is important to note that the relationship between homelessness and substance use is bidirectional, meaning an individual may have a substance use disorder before experiencing homelessness, or they may develop one because they experience homelessness.
- Mental health conditions
- Experience with trauma, including adverse childhood experiences (e.g., separation of a child from their home or parent—being ordered to leave home, running away, being placed in foster care, and having a biological parent incarcerated), prior military service, etc.



People experiencing homelessness often encounter the criminal justice system due to low-level offenses such as panhandling, loitering, trespassing, etc. Law enforcement may be called when someone who is experiencing homelessness may be the victim of a crime or experiencing a mental health crisis such as having delusions, hallucinations, mania, suicidal thoughts, etc.

Sources:

Eun-Gu Ji, 2006, “A Study of the Structural Risk Factors of Homelessness in 52 Metropolitan Areas in the United States,” *International Social Work* 49(1): 107–117.

Katherine H. Shelton, Pamela J. Taylor, Adrian Bonner, and Marianne van den Bree, 2015, “Risk Factors for Homelessness: Evidence from a Population-Based Study,” *Psychiatric Services* 60(4): 465–472.

Madeline Bailey, Erica Crew, and Madz Reeve, August 2020, *No Access to Justice: Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness and Jail*, Brooklyn, New York: Vera Institute of Justice, retrieved from <https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/no-access-to-justice.pdf>.

Paul Koegel, Elan Melamid, and M. Audrey Burnam, 1995, “Childhood Risk Factors for Homelessness Among Homeless Adults,” *American Journal of Public Health* 85(12): 1642–1649.



SLIDE 14.7 OPTIONAL VIDEO – HOW TO FIX AMERICA’S WORSENING HOMELESS CRISIS



Trainer Note: Play this optional video if time permits and/or if guest speakers are unavailable to speak to the topic of homelessness in your community. Be sure to share this video with guest speakers ahead of time if you plan to present it as part of the module. If you do not plan to use this video, it is recommended that you hide the slide ahead of time in the PowerPoint. Follow up with the questions below.



Optional Video Activity: Show Video “How to Fix America’s Worsening Homeless Crisis” (10:37) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LduaiX0yj6E>

Produced by Bloomberg CityLab in 2021, this video discusses the history and prevalence of homelessness in the United States and highlights the complexity of the causes of homelessness. It also highlights strategies used by some cities to support individuals who are experiencing homelessness in their communities.



Ask participants: Has your community experienced any shifts in policies or practices to manage common issues related to homelessness? If so, what have you observed from this? How has this affected your work?

Resources



Resources for People Experiencing Homelessness in Our Community

SLIDE 14.8 RESOURCES

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Trainer Note: Use this slide to share resources for people experiencing homelessness in your community, including those that serve individuals with behavioral health conditions and disabilities. Some examples of these may include:

- Emergency shelters
- Soup kitchens
- Short-term housing/Transitional housing
- Permanent housing
- Agencies serving as intake for the continuum of care (to access HUD homeless assistance resources)
- Community-based health/behavioral health treatment providers
- Medical clinics
- Employment opportunities
- Assistance in applying for public benefits



Module Wrap-Up

Questions?

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SLIDE 14.9 MODULE WRAP-UP/Q&A



Trainer Note: Invite participants to ask questions before moving on to the next module.

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