



the visible child
children • family • community

Key Family Homelessness Facts²

Over 7,000 people are homeless on a given night in Minnesota.

Of this number, 2,726 (35 percent) were children.

Another 1,951 children were affected by homelessness but were not with their homeless parent.

Forty-nine (49) percent of children were age five or younger.

Nearly one in four (23 percent) reported their first experience with homelessness had been as a child.

Seventy (70) percent of homeless youth and young adults had experienced placement in a foster home, group home, treatment center, or correctional facility.

Supportive Housing Provider Group

Breaking Free
Dakota Woodlands
East Metro Women's Council
Emma Norton Services/Emma's Place
Indigenous Peoples Task Force
Jeremiah Program
Lutheran Social Services
Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center
Model Cities, Inc.
New Foundations, Inc.
Perspectives Family Center
RS Eden
Simpson Housing/Passage Community
Tubman
Wayside House, Inc.
Wilder Foundation/Jackson Street Village
YWCA of St. Paul

The Visible Child Legislative Initiative:

Closing the Gap for Homeless Children Ages 0–4

Young children who have been homeless face dramatically reduced opportunities for healthy development. Toddlers living in homeless families begin to demonstrate significant developmental delays after 18 months of age, and the risk for poor social, emotional, and cognitive developmental outcomes increase as children progress from early childhood to school age.¹

Background

Minnesota's Homeless Young Children

- Nearly half of Minnesota's children in shelters and temporary housing are under age six.²
- Homelessness can be devastating for young children's social, emotional, and cognitive development.
- Only half of Minnesota's children enter kindergarten fully prepared to learn.³ Minnesota has embraced quality early childhood education as the best way to close racial and income gaps and to prepare children for school.

Infant-Toddler Discovery Project

The Infant-Toddler Discovery Project interviewed 185 parents and staff in 17 shelters, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing programs. Main findings included:

- The home environments of two thirds of three and four year olds did not provide adequate stimulation or resources to support the children's development.
- Nearly 50% of children under four were not in a quality early childhood program.
- Staff and parents are in need of basic tools and resources to meet the needs of very young children.

Our Children Need Us More Than Ever

All children need to be surrounded by adults who care about them and understand their developmental needs. No one needs this healthy start more than children who have been homeless.

Recommendations for 2009/2010 Legislative Session

- Ensuring that young children who have experienced homelessness have uninterrupted access to early childhood education. A key strategy to meet this goal is to decouple children's access to childcare from their parents' Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) status.
- Increasing resources available to homeless shelters and supportive housing to meet the cognitive and social emotional needs of homeless children.

¹ Garcia Coll, Buckner, Brooks, Weinreb, and Bassuk, *The Developmental Status and Adaptive Behavior of Low-Income Housed Infants and Toddlers*, *American Journal of Public Health*, 1998.

² Wilder Research, *Overview of Homelessness in Minnesota*, 2006.

⁴ Ready 4 K (2007). *Moving the Needle on School Readiness: Minnesota's Legislative Challenge*

The Infant-Toddler Discovery Project is a research and action project to promote the healthy development of Minnesota's homeless children ages 0–4. The project is sponsored by the Family Housing Fund in partnership with the Family Supportive Housing Group, a network of 17 supportive housing organizations in the Twin Cities that provide housing and services to homeless families with children.

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