

## Situation Analysis:

# One in four Nashville Children lives in Poverty

### Overview

Local organizations serving women and children indicate that they get far more shelter and program requests from this population than they have the capacity for. A national study released in 2009 found that one in every 50 American children experiences homelessness. Every year more than 1.5 million children are homeless at one point in time. ([www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org](http://www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org)) And according to the U.S. Census, 24.8% of children under the age of 18 in Davidson County live below the poverty level. That is nearly one in every four children. (American Community Survey, 2005-09)

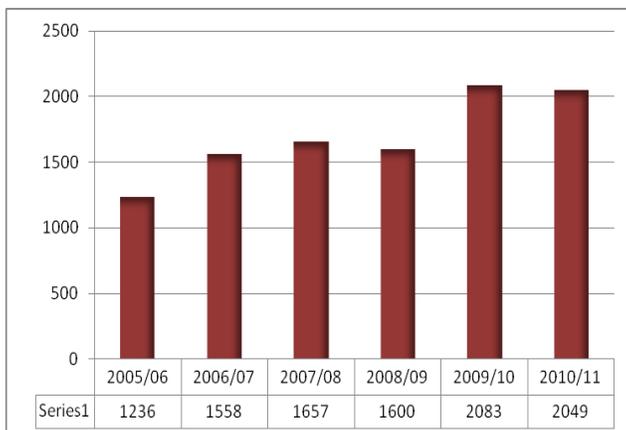
In Tennessee, more than 16,500 children are estimated to be homeless per year. Divided into age groups:

- Nearly 7,000 are under the age of 6;
- Nearly 8,000 are enrolled in grades K-8; and
- About 1,700 are enrolled in grades 9-12.

These totals do not include about 2,000 homeless youth.

*During school year 2010/11, Nashville MNPS identified 2,049 school children as being homeless at one point during the school year.*

In Nashville, according to the Tennessee Department of Education, the number of homeless children enrolled in Metro Public schools has been increasing steadily since 2005:



- 1,236 in 05/06;
- 1,558 in 06/07;
- 1,657 in 07/08;
- More than 1,600 in 08/09;
- 2,083 in 09/10; and
- 2,049 in 10/11.

The total student enrollment in Nashville/Davidson County public schools is about 75,000.

Metro Social Services finds that there is a lack of affordable housing for women with children. The current waiting list for public housing or Section 8 Housing

fluctuates from 500-3,000 families. The majority of families living in poverty are headed by females. Lack of affordable child care is a problem. Women with male children above 10-12 years of age have limited access to emergency shelter.

### Who Are Homeless Families?

The typical sheltered homeless family is comprised of a mother in her late twenties with two children.

- 84% of families experiencing homelessness are female-headed. This is due to a number of factors:
  - Most single-parent families are female-headed (71%). Single-parent families are among the poorest in the nation and as such are extremely vulnerable to homelessness.
  - Many family shelters do not accept men into their programs, causing families to separate when they become homeless.
  - Families of color are overrepresented in the homeless population. Nationally:
    - 43% are African-American
    - 38% are White, non Hispanic
    - 15% are Hispanic
    - 3% are Native American.
- Families experiencing homelessness usually have limited education.
  - 53% of homeless mothers do not have a high school diploma.
- 29% of adults in homeless families are working.
- 42% of children in homeless families are under the age of six.

Updated in July 2011

Prepared for The Next Door by the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission.

### Notes from the author:

*Most local programs do not collect specific data on single women with children. Therefore, it was impossible to collect hard facts that show the precise demand for permanent housing for women and children satisfactorily. Results in this analysis are based on anecdotal answers.*

*According to 211 data, 14% of all calls in 2009 asked for housing and shelter.*

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## Information from Local Programs

### **Safe Haven:**

- Receives about 70 unduplicated calls per month from families in need of shelter/housing;
- Has a capacity of about 1-2 families per month;
- Most families served are single-mother headed households (70-85%).

*Observation:* The need for expanded shelter, case management and transitional housing are at an all time high.

### **House of Mercy:**

- Receives about 10-15 requests for each available room;
- Serves four families at a given time, about a total of six families throughout the year;
- Families served consist of one woman and up to two children (children must be up to 11 years, not older);

*Observation:* When moms graduate, House of Mercy works with families to help them find permanent housing. There are very few programs that take women and children in early recovery from alcohol and drug addictions.

### **YWCA:**

- The goal this year is to serve 280 women in the domestic violence shelter. On average the women and their families stay for 30 to 45 days;
- Based on current departures, 65-70% of the women are seeking permanent housing;

*Observation:* As women exit the shelter, they need safe, affordable, permanent housing. They also need access to resources (childcare, counseling services, transportation, career building services, etc.) to sustain their families.

### **Magdalene House:**

Serves 21 women (no children). Waiting list of about 100.

### **Salvation Army:**

For Statistical Year 2009: (The Salvation Army runs on a fis-

cal year from Oct. 1-Sept. 30)

- Transitional Housing: 116 family cases;
- Social Services: 1,866 family cases.

### **Nashville Rescue Mission's Family Life Center: (Women & Children)**

From May 09-Dec. 09 a total of 818 new women were registered. Of those:

- 682 were single women, no family;
- 25 were homeless women with husband; and
- 110 were homeless women with husband and/or children.

### **Renewal House**

Each day, Renewal House has capacity for about 32 mothers and their children up to 10 years old and receives about two requests for shelter every day from men, single women and women with children.

*Observation:* The highest need is for women with three or more children.

### **The Next Door**

- Since 2004, The Next Door served about 700 women with dual diagnosis in the residential program (40 slots) as well as the permanent housing component (20 units);
- Receives 3-5 requests per month for the permanent housing component.

### **TN Dept. of Corrections**

The total number of women with Davidson County convictions who were released in 2009 was 321. Women who expired their sentences are not required to leave an address.

### **TN Board of Probation & Parole**

Each offender must have a release plan approved before being released. Sometimes people are released to temporary addresses (halfway houses, relatives' homes, motels). But it has to be approved as suitable.

*Observation:* Having somewhere suitable to live is a very important factor in being successful in parole.

## Women's - Hope Center

(of the Nashville Rescue Mission)

Did you know the average client ...

...is 38 years old (33 answered this question)

...has 2 children (31 answered this question)

...has completed 12 years of school (33 answered this question)

...has spent 15 months in jail (13 answered this question)

...began to use drug/alcohol at the age of 15 (33 answered this question)

...identified at the age of 28 they had a problem (32 answered this question)

...had their first sexual experience at age 15 (32 answered this question)

...has been to 3 programs before the Nashville Rescue Mission (21 answered this question)

...has a sobriety period of 31 months after a program (21 answered this question)

...has spent 28 months [homeless] since her last paying job (32 answered this question)

100% clients state they are a Christian (33 answered this question)

58% are from 2 parent homes (19 answered this question)

66% have suffered sexual, mental or physical abuse (22 answered this question)

55% suffer from some form of mental illness (18 answered this question)

97% state they are straight (33 answered this question)

45% have prostituted themselves (32 answered this question)

## **2-1-1 Demographics from August 2008:**

(snapshot of answers)

- 83% of callers are female;
- 49% of all callers are 35-54 years old;
- 35% of all callers are 22-35 years old;
- 38% are employed with an annual income of \$20,000 or less;
- 10% are employed with an income of \$20,000-\$25,000;
- 5% are employed earning \$30,000 or more;
- 15% have an income from SSI/SSDI (\$15,000 or less);
- 5% have an income from SSI/SSDI (\$15,000 or more);
- 18% did not answer income questions;
- 51% believe substance abuse is a problem in the community;
- 86% report there is no substance abuse in the family;
- 13% report there is substance abuse only in the family; and
- 1% report there is substance abuse and mental health issues.