The Past, Present, and Future of Federal Policy on Family Homelessness

Beyond Housing, Institute for Children, Poverty & Homelessness

Thursday, January 16, 2020

Resources, Handouts, Presentations.
About SchoolHouse Connection

SchoolHouse Connection works to overcome homelessness through education. We provide strategic advocacy and practical assistance in partnership with schools, early childhood programs, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth.

- Website: http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org
- Newsletter: https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/sign-up/
- Federal and state policy advocacy
- Q&A from our inbox
- Webinars and implementation tools
- Youth leadership and scholarships

About First Focus on Children

First Focus on Children is a bipartisan advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families the priority in federal policy and budget decisions. Our organization leads a comprehensive advocacy strategy, with its hands-on experience with federal policymaking and a commitment to seeking policy solutions.

- Website: https://firstfocus.org/
- Federal policy advocacy
- Cross-sector children’s policy
- Publishes annual Children’s Budget Book
- Run Children’s Budget Coalition and U.S. Child Poverty Action Group
Those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it.
Since the late 1990s, federal homelessness policy has been focused on the most visible forms of homelessness.
Ending Chronic Homelessness

The Bush administration declared in its 2003 budget proposal that it considers "ending chronic homelessness in the next decade a top objective." This may seem a surprising goal for a Republican administration in a time of economic downturn. The good news is that it is not rhetoric. Ending chronic homelessness is actually achievable, and it can be done in ways that will actually save money.
Kamala Harris calls for more federal funds to end chronic homelessness

Kamala Harris is calling for a substantial increase in federal funding to fight homelessness, in the latest example of how the housing crisis has become a major issue in the presidential race.

Harris will introduce a bill when the Senate returns from recess later this month to dedicate more than $13 billion over the next five years for building new supportive housing and expanding housing vouchers for people on the verge of losing their home. The California senator argues that such a level of spending could effectively end chronic homelessness in America.
Targeting of HUD homeless funds in late 1990s

Late 1990s

The top priority of Obama’s 2010 federal plan

2004

“Chronic Homelessness” initiative in 2004

2010

“Unsheltered homeless individuals” is a top priority in 2018 federal plan

2018

“Ending Homelessness Act of 2019” - $13 billion largely prioritizing unsheltered/chronically homeless

2019

Trump, HUD, NAEH focus on unsheltered homelessness in CA, TX, and NY.

2020
But what does it mean to effectively “end” homelessness?
“Functional Zero:”
when the number of individuals experiencing a housing crisis is equal to or fewer than the number of permanent housing units available to them.

“Effectively End:”
when the number of homeless people within a community is less than the average number of people being connected with permanent housing each month.

USICH
An end to homelessness means that every community will have a comprehensive response in place that ensures homelessness is prevented whenever possible, or if it can’t be prevented, it is a rare, brief, and one-time experience.
How effective is current federal homelessness policy for families?

Is homelessness increasing or decreasing?
Family homelessness is declining -- despite very difficult housing markets.

“Family homelessness is declining, and it is declining despite very difficult housing markets.”

National Alliance to End Homelessness, October 14, 2019
EXHIBIT 3.1: PIT Estimates of Homeless People in Families with Children
By Sheltered Status, 2007–2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total People in Families</th>
<th>Sheltered People in Families</th>
<th>Family Households</th>
<th>Unsheltered People in Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>234,558</td>
<td>178,328</td>
<td>78,535</td>
<td>56,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>235,259</td>
<td>181,506</td>
<td>75,750</td>
<td>53,753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>238,096</td>
<td>187,313</td>
<td>78,514</td>
<td>50,783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>241,937</td>
<td>191,325</td>
<td>79,442</td>
<td>50,612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>236,175</td>
<td>186,482</td>
<td>77,184</td>
<td>49,693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>239,397</td>
<td>190,996</td>
<td>77,155</td>
<td>48,401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>222,190</td>
<td>191,571</td>
<td>70,957</td>
<td>30,619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>216,261</td>
<td>191,903</td>
<td>67,613</td>
<td>24,358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>206,286</td>
<td>185,824</td>
<td>64,197</td>
<td>20,462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>194,716</td>
<td>175,563</td>
<td>61,265</td>
<td>19,153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>184,411</td>
<td>167,723</td>
<td>57,886</td>
<td>16,688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>180,413</td>
<td>164,023</td>
<td>56,342</td>
<td>16,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>171,670</td>
<td>156,891</td>
<td>53,692</td>
<td>14,779</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The View from Public Schools: Education Data Compared to HUD Data

Counts of Homeless Population

- Students
- Chronic Individuals
- Persons in Families
- Veterans

Data showing the counts of homeless population from 2009 to 2019, with a significant increase in recent years.
Overall number of homeless students enrolled: at least a **10% increase**
Federal (and State) Policies on Family Homelessness Are Shaped by Two Competing Paradigms (1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Paradigm</th>
<th>Poverty Paradigm</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family homelessness is a simple. Affordable housing ends homelessness.</td>
<td>Family homelessness is complex and inextricably connected to poverty. Solutions also must include education, job training/employment, health care, child care, early child programs, mental health supports/counseling, recovery, and an array of services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapid Rehousing works for most families, and permanent supportive housing for the few who need/qualify for it. Transitional or “bridge” housing is too expensive/ineffective.</td>
<td>Transitional or “bridge” housing is an effective model for many families to truly overcome homelessness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness should be defined narrowly to include only shelters and streets (HUD definition). Those situations are the most vulnerable.</td>
<td>Homelessness for families/ youth should include staying with others temporarily and motels. Those situations can be equally vulnerable; outcomes for children are comparable to other situations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Federal (and State) Policies on Family Homelessness Are Shaped by Two Competing Paradigms (2)

<table>
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<th>Housing Paradigm</th>
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<tr>
<td>Because housing is the answer, an adult-centric system with minimal services/focus on children is acceptable. Housing will solve children’s issues.</td>
<td>The lasting trauma of homelessness demands intentional services/focus on children throughout the homelessness system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is appropriate to focus the bulk of homeless services/funding/action on unsheltered single adults, Mainstream resources are available for families.</td>
<td>Families experiencing homelessness face tremendous barriers to accessing mainstream resources, which have been exacerbated by the inadequacies/low priority of families in the homelessness system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The end goal is any kind of roof, and ideally subsidized housing voucher.</td>
<td>The end goal is escaping poverty and self-sufficiency.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Child/Family Homelessness

Adult Homelessness

Youth and Young Adult Homelessness
MORE ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES INCREASE RISK FOR ADULT HOMELESSNESS

As ACE scores increase (e.g., the level of adversity someone experiences in childhood), so does adult homelessness.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Incident of ACEs</th>
<th>ACE Score and Relation to Adult Homelessness</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 0               | Proportion of Washington residents experiencing adult homelessness (among participants in Washington’s Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System).  

Infographic by Perry Firth
Los Angeles

HUD PIT: Across all age groups of unsheltered homeless adults 25 years of age and older

- Over a quarter said that their first homeless episode occurred when they were between 18 and 24 years of age.
- A quarter say it was when they were 25 to 34.
- A fifth say it was when they were children.

Seattle

When asked how old they were the first time they experienced homelessness:

- 18% of survey respondents (whether sheltered or unsheltered) were children under the age of 18.
- 27% were young adults between the ages of 18 and 24.
- 55% were adults over the age of 24.

https://economicrt.org/publication/escape-routes/

And Yet...

Ending Chronic Homelessness by 2012 2015 2016 2017

I guess you’ll have to wait until you grow up.

When will it be our turn?
Change the Conversation; Change the Policies
Recent Coverage

For Kids Experiencing Homelessness, Back-To-School Can Mark A Return To Stability

The New American Homeless
Housing insecurity in the nation’s richest cities is far worse than government statistics claim. Just ask the Goodmans.

By BRIAN GOLDSMITH

The California Sunday Magazine

3 kids. 3 psychchecks. No home.
South of San Francisco, in a fertile corner of California that feeds much of the country, working families are sleeping in shelters and parking lots.
The Imperative of Grassroots Advocacy

• You can be the voice for children, youth, and families.
• You are the expert. Most national organizations are removed from ground-level reality, and may not be representing your views.
• Constituent engagement is the best way – and often the only way – to change policy. We’ve seen this again and again.

UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.

—The Lorax
Yes, it’s an election year. But....

• There will still be a federal budget.
• It’s important to build support over the long term for effective policy proposals via “message bills.”
• Administrative advocacy and state policy offer other means to change policy.
FY2021 Budget: HUD Homelessness Assistance Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)

Most likely legislative vehicle for policy changes in the near future.

- FY2020 NOFA included language that restricts HUD to the priorities of the FY2018 NOFA, with limited exceptions.

- It is critical to urge Members of Congress to support a HUD NOFA that is balanced between populations and program models, locally-driven, and incentives services for children, youth, and families.
The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2019
H.R. 2001 (HCYA)

Corrects long-standing flaws in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) homeless assistance for children, youth, and families.

- Aligns federal definitions of homelessness by amending HUD’s definition so that children and youth identified by one of eight federal programs (including McKinney-Vento liaisons) would be eligible for HUD homeless assistance.
- Requires HUD to honor local community priorities and needs.
- Improves data on homelessness.
Additional Federal Legislative Priorities

School-Housing Partnerships
- Affordable Housing for Educational Achievement Demonstration (AHEAD) Act (S. 3011)

Prioritize and Protect Affordable Housing for Children and Youth (All Bipartisan!)
- Housing for Homeless Students (H.R. 4865/S.767)
- Family Stability and Opportunity Vouchers (S. 3083)
- Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Act (H.R. 4300/S.2803)
- Eviction Crisis Act (S. 3030)

Higher Education
- Higher Education Access and Success for Homeless and Foster Youth (HEASHFY) Act (S.789/H.R.1724)
Administrative Action/Advocacy

Relatively “Low-Hanging Fruit” in an election year:

- Advocacy for adding points for prioritizing/serving homeless children/youth/families in federal funding opportunities
- Policy clarifications (FAFSA, Job Corps)
- Report language: Education for Homeless Children and Youth federal compliance; outreach to homeless/foster on college access; HEARTH requirements on ensuring children are connected to school
- Ensuring full count of the 2020 Census.

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Welcome
End Child Poverty US Campaign

Percentage of children living in poverty in the U.S.

- 16.2% of children

Rate of children experience poverty.

- 54.4% higher than adults

Homelessness inextricably linked to high rates of child poverty.

- First Focus runs the **U.S. Child Poverty Action Group**, we launched campaign last year to put study findings into action. Ultimate goal is a national target to cut our child poverty rate in half within a decade.
- National legislation on the way
- State momentum - campaigns/targets underway in CA, WI, ME, VT and NY and in some cities (Cincinnati, Dallas)
- Join our listserv at [www.endchildpovertyus.org](http://www.endchildpovertyus.org) and follow us on Twitter at @CPAG_USA
State Legislative Advocacy

- Empowering minors to consent for shelter, services, health and behavioral health care
- Supporting high school graduation, transition to higher education, college graduation, and employment
- Increasing access to child care
- Providing access to vital documents

14 States
23 Bills
15 Bills Passed to Date
State Legislative Advocacy

https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/policy-advocacy/state-policy/

- Updates on pending legislation
- State advocacy tools
- State law briefs


- Research and tools from the National Conference of State Legislatures
Questions?

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