Council on Homelessness

2011 Report

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Submitted June 2011
to

Governor Rick Scott
Senate President Mike Haridopolos
House Speaker Dean Cannon
Secretary David E. Wilkins

Council on Homelessness
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Contents

Exhibits

Cover:

The Alvarez - Braverman Family

Ms. Alvarez-Braverman, and her two sons, lost their home after the mortgage payments increased. The Families in Transition program at the Seminole County Public Schools identified the boys as homeless after the foreclosure, due to having to share their neighbor's home. The family was referred by the Families in Transition program to a transitional housing program in Seminole County. The "Housing Now" program is a federally funded effort to provide rent assistance, case management and supportive services to enable the household to move back into community housing. As a result of this program's help, the sons, Joey and Jacob, are doing well, and their grades improved once they were back in their own apartment. Ms. Alvarez-Braverman is working with her "Housing Now" case manager to get a new job and further her plans to go back to school.

Rick Scott
Governor

David E. Wilkins
Secretary

Jeffery McAdams
Chairperson

June 22, 2011

The Honorable Rick Scott
Governor
PL05 The Capitol
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0001

Dear Governor Scott:

On behalf of the members of the Council on Homelessness, it is my honor to submit the Council's 2011 report for your consideration.

In accordance with state law, the Council has prepared recommendations for reducing homelessness in our state. The report also summarizes the extent of homelessness and characteristics of the men, women, and children who are without a place to call home.

As Florida helps to provide new jobs and rebuild the economy following the recession, there is a critical need to help those who have lost their ability to provide for their housing. Families with children are the fastest growing segment for those who are homeless. The children in these situations are the innocent victims.

Homelessness is expensive. Communities across our state are spending over $300 million each year in federal, state, local and private funding to help those who are, or are at risk of becoming, homeless. This amount reflects only the spending on local shelters, temporary housing and services to help those in need. It does not include the significant, and far more costly, expenditures to our state for hospital care, the child welfare system, law enforcement, jail, and court costs as our communities try to cope with the people forced to survive on the streets. Ignoring the problem simply costs all taxpayers more than investing in solutions that prevent or end homelessness.

The Council is committed to addressing the services and housing needs of our vulnerable neighbors. If you have questions on the report, I can be reached at (352) 376-1629.

Sincerely,

Jeff McAdams
Chairperson

cc: David E. Wilkins, Secretary; Department of Children and Families

In accordance with section 420.622(9), Florida Statutes, the Council on Homelessness is submitting its annual report to the Governor and the Florida Legislature to provide recommendations for reducing homelessness in the state.

The Need

Daily, nearly 60,000 Floridians live on the street or stay in emergency shelters. Florida has the third largest population of homeless persons of any state in the nation.

Not included in the above figure are over 49,000 school-aged children who were identified by the public school districts as being homeless during the 2009-2010 school year.

With the unemployment rates over 10 percent, and the continuing volume of home foreclosures displacing families, the crisis of homelessness continues to grow and claim more victims with no place to live.

State's Role in Homelessness

State government must sustain its commitment begun in 2001 to partner with local agencies to serve the men, women and children who lack a safe place to live. This commitment must include:

- Sustaining and building the capacity of the local entities that plan for and provide direct services to those in need. Greater staff resources are critical to successfully bring private and federal resources into Florida to address this problem.

- Continuing to provide funding for grants targeted to serve those persons who have become homeless, as well as to prevent households facing this crisis from losing their home.

- Providing strong leadership from the Governor's Office to chair the Council to coordinate various state agency efforts to reduce homelessness, and bringing business leaders to the table to help craft new partnerships to solve the problem of lack of jobs and housing that everyone can afford to rent or own.

Housing is Central

The lack of safe and decent housing affordable to all Floridians is the core cause of homelessness. For households earning minimum wage, and those on fixed incomes, there are not enough low cost homes and apartments available. The Council calls on our state leaders to:

- Preserve and repair existing affordable homes and apartments which have federal rental assistance contracts to sustain this limited supply of affordable rental housing units.

- Target the state's resources to create rental housing for those most in need - households with extremely low-income levels, and those with special housing needs. This includes the elderly, persons with disabilities, youth leaving foster care and the survivors of domestic violence.

- Promote cost effective housing solutions such as the Housing First model, and permanent supportive housing where services are linked to the individual being housed.

Children - The Innocent Victims

The Florida Coalition for the Homeless, in connection with the National Center on Family Homelessness, has developed the Florida Plan to End Child Homelessness. This 2011 plan details a number of actions the state and its community partners can undertake to keep our children safely housed, and end the trauma of becoming homeless.

If the State does not take an active role to lead the effort in reducing homelessness, more tax dollars will be required to fund Medicaid, healthcare, criminal justice and educational services. Maintaining the status quo, rather than reducing and ultimately ending homelessness, will only perpetuate the problem

With the support of state government, local communities and the business sector, Florida can lead the nation in reducing homelessness.

Section One

Council on Homelessness – A Call to Action

Florida is in a Crisis.

The high levels of unemployment and the foreclosures of hundreds of thousands of homes and apartments has created an epidemic of homelessness. The scope of the problem is worsening by the day. It is an epidemic that, given the present economic climate, is likely to continue to spread. Without stable income and affordable housing, our families, friends and neighbors will not be able to remain in their homes**.** They will be forced to temporarily stay with family and friends, and ultimately will end up in shelters or on the streets.

The Crisis is Growing and Impacts Us All.

The recession has added new faces of homelessness. Increasingly, families with minor children have lost, and continue to lose, their housing. Households from all walks of life are becoming homeless. For most, this is the first time in their lives they have faced this type of crisis. They are struggling to learn where to go for help; and many are ashamed to ask for help. The face of homeless is a face like yours and mine. It is the face of our neighbors.

People experience the loss of housing for many reasons. For most, it can be a temporary situation, overcome by obtaining a job, regaining one's health, or finding an affordable place to live. Unfortunately, in today's economic climate, homelessness is becoming more frequent and of longer duration.

Florida has the third highest number of persons who are living on its streets, or in emergency shelters, in our country. Daily, nearly 60,000 people live on the street or stay in shelters. Unfortunately, the count is most likely a gross underestimate of the actual number of Floridians without housing of their own.

These numbers do not capture the "invisible" homeless – those who are forced to share the housing of others. This is especially true for families with children who have lost their homes. Nationally, families are the fastest growing segment of our homeless population, with an increase of over 30% in just 3 years.

Reflective of this growing family homelessness, Florida's public schools identified over 49,000 children who were homeless during the 2009-2010 school year. Every school district in Florida identified homeless students. Of these homeless children, 75 percent were sharing the housing of other people, due to the loss of housing or economic hardship.   The number of homeless children is in addition to the daily street count reported above. Our state cannot ignore these innocent victims of the recession and housing crisis.

Cure: Jobs and Housing

Our state and nation must focus on creating good jobs. Without a stable income, individuals and families are not able to afford to sustain their own housing. The state must increase the supply of low cost rental housing to meet the growing demand.

Florida must get our citizens back to work. Without jobs that provide incomes sufficient to afford market-rate housing costs, Florida must make affordable housing available to households at the lowest income levels. Although there is now an oversupply of rental

housing in some areas of the state, this housing is not attainable to most households with incomes below 40% of the area's median income.

A significant portion of rental housing with project based rental assistance houses extremely low-income families, disabled persons and elders. This housing is at risk of losing its affordability, and many more units are aging and in great need of rehabilitation.

Providing emergency rental assistance will keep families from becoming homeless, which is cost-effective for the community in the short and long term.

Homelessness is Growing and Everyone is Paying for It.

Doing nothing costs significantly more than proven solutions. Keeping a family from being evicted by providing short-term aid for housing costs is significantly less expensive than having to place them in shelters or other institutional settings. The "Housing First" model, which seeks to restore the person to permanent housing as quickly as possible, saves money over the traditional approaches to sheltering.   Florida law now encourages all communities to use this approach to serve the homeless.

Communities across our state are spending over $300 million each year in federal, state, local and private funding to help those who are, or are at risk of becoming, homeless. This amount reflects only the spending on local shelters, temporary housing and services to help those in need. It does not include the significant, and far more costly, expenditures to our state for hospital care, the child welfare system, law enforcement, jail, and court costs as our communities try to cope with the people forced to survive on the streets.

For example, Jacksonville calculated its annual cost to house those who were homeless in the local jail at $5.0 million in 2004.

U.S. Interagency on Homelessness cites many studies conducted across the country, which calculate the financial cost of chronic homelessness to communities. The cost of emergency room visits, emergency shelters, hospitalization, and jail stays was $35,000 to $150,000 per person per year. Even the nation's most comprehensive supportive housing programs cost only $13,000 to $25,000 per person per year. This represents a savings of $10,000 to $137,000 per person per year.

The amount of money our hospitals spend to serve our homeless neighbors has not been tabulated, but is likely to exceed the costs in the criminal justice system since many of the people experiencing homelessness lack healthcare insurance.

There is a more productive and cost effective use of precious and limited public money than the presently overused and extremely expensive measures such as hospitalization, arrest, and jailing, that are now resorted to because of the lack of adequate alternatives. The focus needs to be on alleviating homelessness for the individual and our communities, and not continuing to overspend just to manage the problem.

Role of State Government in Homelessness

While Florida has a critical need to create more jobs, especially for those who are now unemployed, and those who are homeless, this is a long-term solution to the issue of poverty and self-sufficiency.

Floridians face a short-term crisis today, and need our help now.

- 49,117 school-aged children were identified as homeless in the 2009-2010 school year in our state; this indicates a 19% increase from 2008-2009.

- Florida has the third highest number of homeless persons by state in our country, with over 58,000 persons homeless on any given day

- 12,240 military veterans were homeless in Florida in 2009, ranking Florida second in the country for the number of homeless veterans.

State government must remain a committed partner with our local communities to solve the problem.

The Legislature recognized the state's responsibility and made this commitment in 2001, and outlined the role of the state to:

- Support the delivery of services to the homeless at the community level.

- Provide flexible state aid to fill the gaps in local services, and not create state run programs or services.

- Promote community visions for how services need to be delivered to those in need, based on the unique character of the community.

- Coordinate access to state agency services through an Office on Homelessness.

Why State Government got involved?

- State agencies were not serving the needs of the homeless, but rather simply referring them to local homeless providers.

- Barriers existed in the state programs that made it difficult for the person who is homeless to receive the services available.

- There was no coordination across state agencies to address the needs of the homeless.

- Fewer than half of the counties in the state were involved in planning for homeless services.

- The bed capacity to serve the homeless population was less than 33% of the daily demand for shelter.

- Florida was not competing for, nor receiving, its share of the federal grants targeted to house the homeless.

What's Changed Since 2001?

- All but four rural counties are now engaged in planning for homeless services.

- Florida's local homeless continuums of care are now very competitive and successful in securing federal grants, reaching $80 million in 2010.

- Expanded the bed capacity statewide to serve 63% of the homeless in 2010.

- Created over 14,600 new housing beds for the people who are homeless, up by 65.75% since 2001.

- State grant assistance helps serve over 49,000 people through services under the local homeless continuum of care plans.

- Since 2009, the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program has helped over 32,610 Florida households avoid eviction and homelessness.

- State aid helped build over 3,600 housing units dedicated to house the homeless, and end their episode of being homeless.

- Council on Homelessness has proposed policies and programs that enable community partners to better access federal, state and local support.

- Limited state aid has enabled local homeless coalitions to sustain staff capacity to undertake essential missions and responsibilities required for federal grants, such as counting the homeless each year on a single day in time.

Council on Homelessness – A Call to Action
Strategic Actions

Florida is experiencing a genuine crisis. Were 49,000 of our children stricken with a disease, the state would act immediately. Homelessness produces immeasurable harm to children; it impacts their health, education and future stability as an adult.

As the entity designated by state law as responsible for making recommendations concerning how Florida addresses its homeless crisis, the Council on Homelessness proposes the following:

Leadership

- Governor Scott should issue an Executive Order to designate Lt. Governor Carroll as Chair the Council on Homelessness. Further, at least three additional members are needed to bring business and corporate executives to the Council to facilitate private/public partnerships to solve the crisis.

- The Legislature shall designate a state university to prepare a report to document the cost of homelessness incurred by law enforcement, courts, jails, schools, child welfare, Medicaid, and hospitals. The report should identify policy changes needed to better utilize existing resources to alleviate homelessness.

- State agencies must work together to use more effectively existing funding and resources to serve those experiencing homelessness. This may require more flexibility in how state dollars are spent.

Jobs and Economic Stability

- The Legislature must develop state incentives for the private sector to create jobs for persons who have become homeless, including tax credits for hiring the homeless.

- Workforce Florida needs to adopt a performance goal to increase employment of the homeless; train and place homeless specialists in the One Stop Centers; and link essential childcare and transportation services to enable the homeless to access jobs.

- The Legislature shall enact a law authorizing the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles to waive the fees for persons who are homeless to secure state identification cards or drivers' licenses.

- The Legislature needs to authorize the Department of Health to waive fees associated with securing birth certificates for persons who are homeless.

Our Military Veterans

- Our federal partner, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has established the goal of ending veterans' homelessness in four years, and has committed $125 billion to the challenge. Florida needs to commit its resources to assure that no money is left on the table and ensure that our veterans receive the assistance for which they are eligible. These veteran benefits will boost our economic recovery.

- Incentives for hiring veterans need to be enhanced, including providing caseworkers to link veterans to federal benefits, and to tap state and local case managers' salaries as matching sources for federal grants.

Housing – The End Goal

- Increase the supply of rental housing to meet the demand of our lowest income neighbors, preserve existing housing which has federal rental subsidies, and explore state rental assistance based on proven strategies from other states.

- Develop viable strategies in order to use foreclosed housing to safely house the homeless.

- Provide short-term financial aid to people who are at risk of being evicted to prevent them from becoming homeless. Prevention intervention is less costly than sheltering the person or household.

Improve Health and Stability.

- Emphasize mental health services for the homeless, especially our military veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress, and other brain injuries. Use Medicaid, VA, and other federal resources to provide trauma informed care models, and the Assertive Community Treatment approach that integrates housing and supportive services needed by the person.

- Make permanent supportive housing services eligible under Medicaid coverage.

Unaccompanied Youth

- Remove barriers to unaccompanied homeless youth, as well as minor homeless youth, to access their birth certificates needed for identification, and health services needed to fully participate in school and further their education.

- Provide short-term housing assistance to families in crisis to avoid costs to the child welfare system, by ensuring housing stability is not a factor in placing children in state care.

- Provide state investments for supportive housing for the young people leaving the foster care system to reduce homelessness among unaccompanied youth.

2011 Legislative Session Outcomes:

The Council on Homelessness commends the Legislature for its leadership in sustaining the state's commitment to join with community partners to plan for and serve those families and individuals who face the challenge of having nowhere to live.

Below is a summary of the recommendations made by the Council for the 2011 Legislative Session as well as the outcome.

- Maintain Funding for Homeless Programs

    o Challenge Grant - Maintain funding at $2,031,354. Grant supports Florida's 28 continuums of care to assist local programs and services, which served 49,963 people in FY09 -10.

        ACTION: 2011-2012 General Appropriations Act (GAA) funds at $2,081,354

    o Local Coalition Staff Grant - Maintain at $345,729. Provides a small grant to each of the 28 local homeless coalitions, who brought in $77.7 million in federal dollars in 2010. Loss of those staff dollars to the local coalitions could result in a 25 percent reduction ($17 million) in federal dollars, as many coalitions would have to close.

        ACTION: 2011-2012 GAA funds at $345,729

    o Office and Council on Homelessness - Maintain at $436,353. Retain the Council to continue to work on policy and program recommendations to reduce homelessness. The state's Office coordinates resources and programs to serve the homeless across all levels of government and private providers to meet individual needs.

        ACTION: 2011-2012 GAA funds at $436,353

- Housing for Extremely Low Income Households

    o Retain the legislative authority for the State Housing Trust Fund, and the Local Government Housing Trust Funds, and remove the cap on the revenue to be deposited into these funds.

        ACTION: House Bill 639 Passed to Enact these provisions.

2012 Legislative Session Proposals

The Council recommends the following proposals for the 2012 Legislative Session.

- Preservation of Existing Affordable Housing

- o Support a policy to require state affordable housing programs to give priority consideration to preserve existing affordable housing apartments that have federal rental assistance to reduce the rental costs.

- o Award state funding as gap financing to leverage federal, local resources, and private investments to preserve and rehabilitate existing affordable rental housing, with a priority to preserve those rental units with federal project based rental assistance contracts.

- Housing for Extremely Low Income Households

  - o Appropriate state funding targeted specifically to assist in acquiring, rehabilitating and preserving rental housing that serves households who have extremely low incomes. Even in the present housing market, these households are unable to afford market rate housing

  - o Fund the Homeless Housing Assistance Grant program at the level of $5,000,000 to create housing for occupancy by persons who are homeless. Maintain a recurring source of funding for the Homeless Housing Assistance Grant, which has assisted over 3,600 permanent housing units to help end homelessness for those who have been safely housed. Transfer funds annually from the state's affordable housing trust funds to sustain this program that distributes the grants through a competitive application process to select housing based on the criteria specified in section 420.622, F.S.

  - o Establish a new state homeless prevention grant program to help renters with the rent and utilities on a short-term basis to enable them to stay in their current housing. This program could be modeled on the success of the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program.

  - o Appropriate funding from the State Housing Trust Fund, the Local Government Housing Trust Fund, and the new Economic Enhancement and Development (SEED) Trust Funds, specifically to support the inclusion of apartment units in family, homeless, supportive housing and elderly multifamily rental developments that are affordable to extremely low-income households. Funding to support even deeper income targeting to support those with incomes at 20% of the area median income is encouraged.

  - o Appropriate state funding for affordable and supportive rental housing that can be layered with other resources such as housing tax credits and private investments, and that is sufficient enough to support the inclusion of housing units for extremely low-income households within a multifamily rental development.

- State Housing Funding - Set-Aside for Special Needs Households, including homeless

  - o Require the use of state and federal housing resources, such as the HOME program, be used for long-term rental assistance tied to affordable rental units. The State Apartment Incentive Loan Program should be amended to permit the use of project-based rental assistance.

  - o Support state agency applications for and use of federal resources that assist homeless and at-risk Floridians to retain or access affordable housing and/or

supportive services to live stable lives. Such housing benefits the entire community and saves state and local resources that fund emergency services, healthcare, institutionalization and incarceration.

Permanent supportive housing is a solution, providing housing with support services to house those in need. It costs less and ends homelessness, rather than merely managing the problem.

Consider the following evidence:

Results of a study by Larimer, et al, reported in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), suggest that chronically homeless persons with severe alcohol problems, generally a population with high service use and costs, benefitted from the Housing First program. There was a significant decrease in total costs after 6 months of 53% compared to the control group. Housing participants had $3,569 less costs per month in the permanent supportive housing model.   The cost reduction benefits increased further when participants were retained in the housing for 12 months or longer. *(Health Care and Public Service Use Costs Before and After Provision of Housing for Chronically Homeless Persons with Severe Alcohol Problems" April 1, 2009.)*

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities community-based services cost $20,000 to $100,000 less per person per year than services provided in a facility setting. Additionally, personal outcomes are 50 percent better when services are provided in a community setting.

The Florida Supreme Court reports[*] that permanent supportive housing plays a vital role in diverting persons from emergency rooms, crisis care settings, long-term psychiatric care, nursing facilities and the justice system. ("Constructing A Comprehensive and Competent Criminal Justice, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment System: Strategies for Planning, Leadership, Financing and Service Development"). Additionally recidivism rates drop a full 40% for people with criminal records that receive supportive housing *(New York Corporation for Supportive Housing)*

- o Keep Florida Housing Finance Corporation's business model intact, which enables the Corporation to effectively access and administer public affordable housing resources that attract and support private affordable housing investment.

- o Require state policy regarding the development of rental housing for homeless households to be based upon the need in the community for such housing, rather than on other housing market conditions.

- Legislation for Homeless Initiatives

  - o Create a state funded homeless prevention grant program to provide short-term financial aid for housing expenses to enable families to avoid eviction and stay in their homes. The program should be tied to the local homeless continuum of care plan, and managed at the community level.

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[*] "Transforming Florida's Mental Health System," Florida Supreme Court, November 2007.

- Create a voluntary contribution option for homelessness relief on issuance and renewal of driver's licenses and auto tags. This modest revenue source will help expand public education on the problem and fund local services to address the needs of people facing homelessness.

- Create financial incentives for the private sector to create jobs for persons who have become homeless. Consider a credit to corporations who hire a homeless person living in temporary housing situations.

- Expand the leadership role of the Council on Homelessness. Retain and update enabling legislation to amend Council composition to designate the Lt. Governor as the Chair of the Council. In addition, expand the membership to add three business and corporate executives to the Council. Retain the homeless enabling legislation in sections 420.621 to 420.628, F.S.

- Require the heads of state-level agencies and organizations authorized to administer federal and state supportive services and housing programs to collaborate to address the community based housing needs of homeless and at-risk Floridians

- Enact enabling legislation to issue at no cost a certified copy of birth certificates to homeless youth under the age of 18, and to unaccompanied homeless youth over the age of 18 to improve the ability of the young person to secure state identification needed for school, employment, and independent living.

- Enact enabling legislation for the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles to waive the fees associated with securing state identification cards and drivers' licenses for persons who are homeless.

- **Improve Programs and Services to Meet Unique Need of Homeless Children**

  Implement the *Florida Plan to End Child Homelessness*, including these proposals:

  - Implement the "Basic Principles of Care for Families and Children Experiencing Homelessness," outlined by the National Center on Family Homelessness, within all programs serving homeless families, youth, and children.[†]

  - Ensure that all programs serving homeless children, youth, and families are trauma-informed and recovery-oriented.

  - Support and partner with the Florida Department of Education in increasing the number of homeless children and youth identified and receiving services by school districts under the education section of the McKinney-Vento Assistance Act.

  - Continue to provide information and technical assistance about the educational provisions of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to school personnel, parents, homeless service providers, domestic violence programs, Head Start programs, colleges and universities, the public, and

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[†] Source: Florida Plan to End Child Homelessness, April 2011. National Center on Family Homelessness and Florida Coalition for the Homeless. See Exhibit 3 for the full text of the Florida Plan.

others working and volunteering with children, youth and families who are homeless.

- o Prioritize use of childcare vouchers to families experiencing homelessness and survivors of domestic violence.

- • 2012 Budget Recommendations

  To address the continued need for services at the community level, and to maintain the service capacity of the agencies and organizations providing these essential services, the Council recommends the following budget levels for state homeless grants.

  - o Challenge Grant $4,750,000

    Authorized in s. 420.622, F.S., this grant helps fund the services and programs contained in the homeless assistance continuum of care plan established by the community.

  - o Homeless Housing Assistance $5,000,000

    Authorized in s. 420.622, F.S., this grant helps local agencies acquire, rehabilitate or construct housing to serve the homeless.

  - o Homeless Grant in Aid $1,100,000

    Authorized in s. 420.625, F.S., this grant funds local communities serving the needs of the homeless with a variety of supportive services.

  - o Local Homeless Coalition Staff Grant $865,000

    Authorized by Chapter 2001-98, Laws of Florida, this grant partially funds a professional staff position in each of the 28 recognized local homeless coalitions in the state, at $30,938 per coalition.

  - o Office and Council on Homelessness $436,353

    Authorized in section 420.622, F.S., the funding maintains the support for the work of the statewide, interagency Council on Homelessness, to develop policy proposals to reduce homelessness. The funding also maintains the staff at the Department of Children and Families to provide interagency, council, and related coordination, referrals and information on issues relating to homelessness.

Section Two

Homeless Conditions 2011

2011 Street Counts

All 28 of the state's local continuum of care planning areas carried out a one-day count of the homeless in their area. The local effort is required every two years by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The purpose is to assess the extent of homelessness across the nation, by conducting a point-in-time count on one day during the last 10 days of January. All continuum of care areas were required to do a point-in-time count for 2011.

Who is counted as homeless?

According to the federal guidelines, the count captures data on those persons who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, and includes any individual who is either:

    a) Living on the street, in their car, park or public or private place not intended for human occupancy;

      Or

    b) Is living in an emergency shelter.

This is a more narrow definition of a homeless person than is currently contained in state law. As such, it does not include:

- A person sharing the housing of family or friends due to the loss of their own housing, economic hardship or similar reason;

- A person living in a motel, travel trailer park or campground due to their lack of an adequate housing alternative.

2011 Count and Trend

With the 2011 count data reported, there are 56,771 persons who were homeless on a single day in Florida this January. The total for 2011 is down 1.35 percent from the 2010 estimated daily homeless population of 57,551.

The data reflects reports from 27 of the 28 continuum of care areas. The last planning area has not finished tabulating its counts for 2011. The 2010 counts were used for the following counties: Manatee and Sarasota.

Point-in-Time Trend Data*	
Year	Total Count
2007	49,916
2008	50,147
2009	55,599
2010	57,551
2011	56,771

*Source: Florida's 28 Continuum of Care Planning Areas Point-in-Time Count of Homeless Population.

The count data by the 67 counties is contained in Exhibit 2 to the report. For 2011, 26 counties showed an increase in the number of homeless individuals, while 24 counties had a decrease in the homeless population. There was no count conducted in 12 counties, which were small, rural counties which lack homeless shelters or providers of service to the homeless.

Why the decline?

The drop in the number of homeless persons for 2011, while Florida continues to recover from the economic recession, may be explained by two factors.

First, there was one continuum of care planning area that made a major correction to its count to only report the persons who are defined as homeless. In prior years, this continuum had also included persons who were at risk of becoming homeless, but not actually homeless in their count. The net result was a decrease in the total count of over 5,000 persons. This correction in the data reflects a downward adjustment of 8.7 percent based on the 2010 total. If this correction had not been necessary, the 2011 count would have been up by 4,231 persons statewide, an increase of 7.35% over 2010.

The other factor helping to reduce homelessness was the major federal government's investment in assistance to help renters pay their rent and utilities to avoid eviction. The Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) funded by the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, provided over $65 million to Florida cities, counties and the state to help renters avoid eviction and homelessness.

These rent assistance dollars became available in mid 2009. Based on the outcomes reported through March 2011, almost 20,000 persons have been able to stay in their rental housing as a result of the local agencies funded by the $21.5 million grant to the Department of Children and Families. In addition, the grant helped to put another 4,300 homeless people back into permanent rental housing

The major investment in prevention has played a significant role in keeping the 2011 counts lower.

Homeless Population Characteristics

The agencies that conduct the point-in-time count also attempt to capture information on those individuals who are homeless. The use of a street survey which asked a small number of questions provides a portion of the following information. In addition, the local homeless management information system captures data on the demographics of the people living in emergency shelters. For 2011, the demographic characteristics of the state's street and shelter homeless population are outlined in the following section.

Gender

Men make up the vast majority of the street and sheltered homeless. For 2011, men constitute 66 percent of the total population reported as homeless.

Gender		
Year	Men	Women
2011	66%	34%
2010	66%	34%
2009	68%	32%

Age

Adults, ages 18 to 60, make up the majority of the homeless on the street and in shelters. Children under the age of 18 make up 18.3% of the 2011 homeless count, up from 16% in 2010.

Age			
Year	Children under 18	Adults 18-60	Elderly Over 60
2011	18.3%	76.4%	5.3%
2010	16.0%	79.0%	5.0%
2009	16.3%	78.5%	5.2%

Ethnicity

For 2011, 11.2% of the homeless persons interviewed reported being either Hispanic or Latino. This is lower than the 2000 census figure for Florida, with 16.8% of the state population being Hispanic or Latino.

Race

The percentage of the homeless population in 2011 who are Black/African American is well above the percentage in the general population of the state. The homeless population is 39.4% Black/African American, compared to the 2000 Census figure of 14.6%.
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Race			
Population Category	2011 Homeless	2010 Homeless 18-60	2000 Census Over 60
American Indian/Alaskan	1.2%	1.7%	0.3%
Asian	0.3%	0.5%	1.7%
Black/African American	39.4%	36.5%	14.6%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.4%	0.5%	0.1%
White	58.7%	57.0%	78.0%
Other/Two or more races	—	3.8%	5.3%

Household Type

The great majority of the street and sheltered homeless are single persons or households without children. For 2011, 26.6% of the total homeless population were households with children. With just over one-quarter of the homeless living on the streets, or staying in emergency shelters having minor children present, there is a need to ensure that the shelters in our state are able to house households with children together, to minimize the trauma of separating family members and to ensure the safety of the children.

Military Veterans

Persons who served on active duty in the U.S. military make up 13.3% of the homeless counted in 2011. This level is down slightly from prior years. This could reflect the increased resources being made available to homeless veterans from the federal government as part of a national effort to eliminate homelessness among our military veterans.

Year	Homeless Veterans
2011	13.3%
2010	16.0%
2009	17.3%

Disabling Condition

The 2011 data reflects a high incidence of disabilities among the people who are homeless. For those interviewed, 44% reporting having a disabling condition.

Disabling Condition	2011	2010	2009
Physical	31.4%	40.0%	33.3%
Substance Abuse	32.8%	27.1%	31.5%
Mental Illness	30.7%	26.0%	27.6%
HIV/AIDS	1.7%	2.6%	3.3%
Developmental	3.4%	4.3%	4.3%

Foster Care History

Another question asked in the point-in-time survey is whether the person has a history of having been in foster care. For 2011, 8.0% of the homeless persons reported having been in foster care during their life.

Foster Care History	2011	2010	2009
	8.0%	8.8%	9.0%

Causes and Length of Homeless Episode

The interviews conducted and the shelter intake records capture information from the individual on what caused them to become homeless. As expected, given the economic times, employment or financial problems are the most commonly cited reason for becoming homeless.

Cause of Homelessness	2011	2010	2009
Employment/Financial	48.7%	53.6%	50.4%
Medical Issue/Disability	18.2%	16.1%	15.6%
Housing Issues	10.7%	11.4%	12.4%
Forced to Relocate	9.0%	6.4%	7.3%
Family Problems	11.5%	11.2%	12.0%
Recent Immigration	0.6%	0.4%	1.4%
Natural Disaster	1.3%	0.9%	0.9%

Number of Times Becoming Homeless

The majority of people interviewed, 53%, reported that they were homeless for the very first time when counted in January 2011.

Times Homeless	2011	2010	2009
First Time	53.0%	43.6%	50.4%
2 or 3 Times	28.4%	30.7%	27.8%
4 or More Times	18.6%	25.7%	21.8%

Length of Time Being Homeless

The 2011 data on how long the person had been homeless when interviewed in January 2011 indicates that 42% had been homeless for less than 3 months. The short duration homeless is up from last year. However, those who have been homeless for longer than a year remains high, with nearly 35% of all homeless persons experiencing long-term episodes.

Length of Time Homeless	2011	2010	2009
Less than 3 Months	42.0%	21.5%	38.5%
3 to 12 Months	23.2%	27.2%	24.8%
1 Year or Longer	34.8%	51.3%	39.3%

Length of Time Living in the Community

The point-in-time surveys and shelter intake forms also ask the person how long they have lived in the community in which they are now homeless. In 2011, over 70% of persons who were homeless reported that they had lived in the community for over one year prior to becoming homeless. The homeless in our state are our neighbors and long-term residents of the state.

Length of Time Living in Community Before Becoming Homeless		
Length of Time	2011	2010
1 Year or Longer	71.2%	76.0%
1 to 12 Months	22.7%	21.4%
Less than 1 Month	6.1%	2.6%

Homeless Children in Florida's Public Schools

The school districts in our state capture and report to the Department of Education, the number of students identified as homeless during the school year.

By federal law, the public schools use the expanded definition of homeless person to include those children and youth who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, including those who are:

1. Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason;

2. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, camping grounds due to lack of adequate alternative housing;

3. Living in emergency or transitional shelters;

4. Abandoned in hospitals; or awaiting foster care placement;

5. Living in a public or private place not designed for or used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings to live;

6. Living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations; substandard housing or similar settings; and

7. Migratory children living in any of the above circumstances.

During the 2009-2010 school year, the Florida school districts identified over 49,000 children and youth who were homeless. This is a 19% increase from 2008-2009. Of those identified, 6,330 (13%) were "unaccompanied youth", defined as not being in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. The majority, 36,633 (75%) were reported as homeless and temporarily sharing the housing of other persons due to the loss of their housing or economic hardship. This category of homeless students was up 33% over the 2008-2009 school year.

Homeless Students		
School Year	Homeless Students*	Change
2005-2006	29,545	—
2006-2007	30,878	4.5%
2007-2008	34,375	11.3%
2008-2009	41,286	20.1%
2009-2010	49,112	19.0%

Source: Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Student Assistance. Survey 5 Student Demographic Format and Federal State Indicator Format, Automated Student Database System

* Number does not include count of homeless students identified in the university developmental research schools.

Success Story

Seminole County Public Schools
Families in Transition

Established in 2008, the Families in Transition program serves the education needs of children who are identified as homeless. The program serves the child and their family with assistance with enrollment procedures, transportation of the child to their school of origin, school supplies, free breakfast and lunch, tutoring if needed, and referrals to local social service agencies as necessary.

- "What a wonderful program, they are loving people involved. I could have not kept my children in their school without it! Thank you." — Parent expressing gratitude to the Seminole County Schools Family in Transition (FIT) program.

- "Ryan's and my life would be totally different without your help. We wouldn't be a family. Thank you for my home of hope and a future. I can get my dignity back and my son can have a place to dream and know he can be anything he wants to be. "

Exhibit 1

Council Participants
2010-2011

	Represented by:
Department of Children and Families	Brandon Butterworth
Department of Community Affairs	Paula Lemmo
Department of Health	Glen Davis
Department of Corrections	Alan McManus
Department of Veterans' Affairs	Alene Tarter
Workforce Florida, Inc.	Chris Hart
Florida Housing Finance Corporation	Bill Aldinger
Agency for Health Care Administration	James McFaddin
Florida Coalition for the Homeless	Rayme Nuckles
Florida Supportive Housing Coalition	Shannon Nazworth
Florida League of Cities	Alana Brenner
Florida Association of Counties	Dave Rogoff Claudia Tuck
Florida Department of Education	Lorraine Husum Allen
Governor's Appointees	Arthur Rosenberg Jeffrey McAdams Joanell Greubel Teri Saunders
Ex Officio	Lindsey Berling-Cannon

Exhibit 2

Homeless People by Florida County

County	2005 Estimate	2006 Estimate	2007 Estimate	2008 Estimate	2009 Estimate	2010 Estimate	2011 Count
Alachua	733	1,217	952	1,381	1,596	879	1,034
Baker	0	0	0	0	N/C	12	2
Bay	1,051	1,051	312	312	352	317	378
Bradford	133	149	67	67	78	5	39
Brevard	2,300	1,600	1,287	1,899	1,207	1,221	1,889
Broward	2,286	3,314	5,218	5,218	4,154	4,154	3,801
Calhoun	0	0	0	N/C	N/C	N/C	1
Charlotte	4,793	3,314	730	730	541	598	716
Citrus	461	498	856	293	297	405	502
Clay	78	0	103	25	N/C	7	113
Collier	418	513	414	321	329	401	390
Columbia	77	208	364	362	554	554	462
DeSoto	136	644	659	639	319	761	15
Dixie	70	77	0	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
Duval	2,911	2,877	2,613	2,681	3,244	3,910	4,284
Escambia	9,100	2,911	1,247	791	713	713	549
Flagler	181	191	207	38	39	79	98
Franklin	30	0	39	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
Gadsden	135	139	177	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
Gilchrist	75	86	0	N/C	N/C	1	6
Glades	7	50	61	172	220	220	N/C
Gulf	0	0	0	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
Hamilton	18	50	83	81	123	343	103
Hardee	24	749	679	835	1,410	1,410	104
Hendry	218	448	426	422	727	727	16
Hernando	409	452	241	196	185	136	148
Highlands	508	436	519	912	1,782	1,782	105
Hillsborough	8,598	8,598	9,532	9,532	7,473	7,473	7,336
Holmes	0	0	0	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
Indian River	402	741	572	462	662	648	606
Jackson	0	0	3	3	N/C	11	34
Jefferson	42	0	56	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
Lafayette	10	26	46	44	69	69	57
Lake	331	395	878	518	491	796	1,008
Lee	2,056	2,078	2,382	899	931	1,041	1,054
Leon	739	739	430	430	437	437	683
Levy	380	201	99	99	115	15	0
Liberty	22	0	30	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C

N/C = No Count conducted.

Homeless people means those living on the street, or staying in emergency housing.

Exhibit 2

Homeless People by Florida County

County	2005 Estimate	2006 Estimate	2007 Estimate	2008 Estimate	2009 Estimate	2010 Estimate	2011 Count
Madison	56	0	73	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
Manatee	1,419	6,722	487	472	558	528	528*
Marion	1,954	2,149	458	458	678	356	941
Martin	495	759	521	507	211	517	306
Miami-Dade	5,160	4,709	4,392	4,574	4,333	3,832	3,777
Monroe	981	981	1,121	1,121	1,040	1,040	926
Nassau	0	0	71	111	N/C	61	165
Okaloosa	1,755	2,026	2,110	1,752	2,361	1,842	2,145
Okeechobee	28	296	316	112	383	383	32
Orange	6,500	6,500	1,473	1,962	1,279	1,494	2,872
Osceola	1,000	1,300	514	573	374	443	833
Palm Beach	2,697	1,002	1,766	1,766	2,147	2,147	2,148
Pasco	4,194	3,677	2,260	4,074	4,527	4,527	4,442
Pinellas	3,786	4,385	4,680	4,680	4,163	3,948	3,890
Polk	749	801	817	973	820	820	1,095
Putnam	170	797	789	789	911	288	141
St. Johns	1,000	997	1,238	1,238	1,237	1,237	1,386
St. Lucie	676	813	641	964	788	995	771
Santa Rosa	7,363	2,527	1,192	237	317	317	72
Sarasota	431	7,253	388	662	787	787	787*
Seminole	1,300	1,500	568	561	368	397	810
Sumter	66	68	44	97	52	48	57
Suwannee	47	134	222	220	343	123	280
Taylor	58	0	75	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
Union	64	79	0	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
Volusia	2,486	2,505	2,483	1,763	1,874	2,076	2,215
Wakulla	78	0	112	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
Walton	140	155	69	N/C	85	420	619
Washington	0	0	6	6	3	N/C	N/C
State Total	83,385	85,887	60,168	59,034	57,687	57,643	56,771

N/C = No Count conducted

*Data for 2011 not yet reported.

Office on Homelessness
May 26, 2011

Florida Plan
TO END CHILD HOMELESSNESS

FLORIDA COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

Florida CAMPAIGN

THE NATIONAL CENTER ON Family Homelessness

Florida Plan
To End Child Homelessness

Large numbers of families and children experience homelessness in Florida. However, current policy, planning, and program responses are unable to meet the need. The Florida Campaign to End Child Homelessness has created this Plan to help increase awareness, inform policies, and improve programs and services with the ultimate goal of preventing and ending child and family homelessness.

A recent report, *America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness,* ranks Florida 43 out of the 50 states on the problem of child homelessness.[1] This ranking takes into account the extent of child homelessness, child well-being, risk for child homelessness, and state policies and plans to address the issue. At the time of the report's publication, approximately 49,886 children and youth were homeless in Florida during the 2005-2006 school year.[2] By 2008-2009, that number had grown to approximately 70,633 homeless children and youth.[3] This represents a 42 percent increase in the number of homeless children and youth in Florida from school year 2005-2006 to 2008-2009.[4] There is little doubt that the economic downturn has led to the increase in numbers of homeless children and families. Most of these children are not found living on the streets. Instead, they are living with their parents and siblings in shelters; in unsafe, substandard housing; or are doubled-up out of financial necessity with family or friends in overcrowded, unstable situations.

Childhood poverty is of grave concern in Florida, with approximately 21 percent of children living below the federal poverty level according to 2009 U.S. Census data.[5] The situation is even worse for non-Caucasian families. A disproportionate number of children in Florida who identify as Black or African American (38 percent) and Hispanic (25 percent) are living in poverty when compared to White children living in poverty (12 percent).[6]

Florida Campaign

The Florida Campaign to End Child Homelessness seeks to galvanize the public and political will to end this crisis. Because it is unacceptable for any child in Florida to be homeless for even one night, we are working with families, service providers, religious organizations, local and state officials, advocates, and citizens across the state to:

• Tell the people of Florida that thousands of children are homeless here. They are scared, sick, and hungry, and there are things that can be done to help.

• Educate our leaders about how investment in and commitment to effective solutions can eradicate child homelessness in our state.

• Alleviate the suffering of homeless children by promoting high quality supports and services as we implement a plan to bring them home.

Definition of Homelessness

This Plan uses the definition of homelessness contained in a subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Title X, Part C, of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and adopted by the U.S. Department of Education.[7] The definition includes children and youth who are: sharing the housing of other persons due to a loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (sometimes referred to as "doubled-up"); living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to a lack of alternative accommodations; living in emergency or transitional shelters; abandoned in hospitals; awaiting foster care placement; using a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings; living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

Florida: Where We Are Now

Across the United States, more families than ever are feeling the strain of the current economic recession and are trying to stretch their limited resources to cover basic necessities. Family and child homelessness is on the rise in all parts of the country, and Florida mirrors these national trends.

From January 2008 to January 2011, the unemployment rate in Florida increased from 4.8 to 11.9 percent.[8] Families that were once living comfortably, now find themselves tightening their budgets and using their savings to stay afloat. With the economy continuing to flounder, new job opportunities are very limited, and people are staying unemployed longer. As of February 2011, Florida ranked second in the nation in the number of home foreclosure filings.[9] Foreclosures of both owner-occupied and renter-occupied homes can put families and children at serious risk of becoming homeless.

Accessing and maintaining affordable housing is paramount to preventing homelessness. In Florida, per federal law, the minimum wage is $7.25 per hour.[10] However, no single person earning minimum wage anywhere in Florida can afford a two-bedroom apartment at Fair Market Rent (FMR).[11] FMR ranges from just under $588 per month in more rural parts of the state, to $1,052 per month in Orlando, to almost $1,360 per month in the Ft. Lauderdale metro region.[12] To afford the average two-bedroom apartment in Florida, a person would need to make $20.29 per hour.[13]

Unfortunately, earning a decent living is often not enough. Limited employment opportunities and income as well as the unavailability of affordable housing are all contributing factors to child and family homelessness. Similar to many states, there is a shortage of affordable housing in Florida. Of the family and domestic violence shelters in the state, most are located in or near the urban centers. There is also a limited supply of transitional housing and permanent supportive housing units for families.

As is common in many states, Florida has faced budget shortfalls for several years, and the future is uncertain. Important decisions need to be made to ensure that resources are allocated to those most in need of support and services. The 70,633 children experiencing homelessness in Florida are the most vulnerable population in the state. Now, more than ever, it is time to make sure their needs are being met and that not one child is left behind.

Thoughts From Around The State

Since June 2009, the Florida Campaign has met with community leaders, service providers, advocates, homeless parents, and policymakers across the state to discuss ways to prevent and end child and family homelessness and to gather recommendations about how the Campaign can bring about lasting change. The information gathered during this process has been used to develop and direct this Plan.

There are many common needs across the state. The most pressing issues facing homeless children, youth, and families include a shortage of safe, adequate, affordable housing; limited employment opportunities that provide a livable wage; and lack of knowledge of and access to supportive resources and services (e.g., health care, mental health care, and nutrition programs as well as transportation) targeted specifically at the unique needs of parents, youth, and children. The importance of providing quality educational opportunities for children, youth, and adults experiencing and at-risk of homelessness as well as the need to increase access to affordable child care were highlighted. The needs to focus on prevention and supporting families in transition were also articulated.

Many quality organizations and providers are working hard to address family homelessness throughout Florida, but their efforts are constrained by limited funding. These organizations want to increase collaboration with others working with homeless families, youth, and children and raise awareness about what is available to help. Many feel their work is constrained by a lack of public awareness of the existence of child, youth, and family homelessness in communities throughout the state. Because Florida is a large and diverse state, regionalized solutions are needed. Community leaders, service providers, and advocates are urging the State to recognize child and family homelessness as a crisis and to prioritize solutions in upcoming legislative sessions, budget negotiations, and state agency work.

Need for Long-Term Stability

Carrie used to work at a child care center, but recently lost her job. She has an 18-month old baby. She has been looking for a new job, but lost her home because she cannot afford to pay the rent. She also cannot afford to pay her car insurance, so she is unable drive her baby to daycare. She finds that it is hard to look for a job while also caring for her baby. Carrie moved into a shelter and needs support so she can find a job and pay for car insurance and child care to secure long-term stability for her and her baby.

Learning From Experience

The Florida Campaign reached out to homeless parents living at shelters to discuss how to best help them achieve permanent housing and stability. The parents were asked about their experiences being homeless and how homelessness affected their children. The information gathered has been incorporated into this Plan and its recommendations.

The parents we spoke with identified several reasons why their families had become homeless. Many articulated struggles to find jobs that pay enough to cover the cost of rent and utilities, experiences of domestic violence and substance abuse that forced them to leave their living situations, and lack of savings and support from family members to fall back on. Several of the parents expressed that they are competing with many people wanting the same position when applying for jobs and that people who are willing to work part-time make it difficult for them to get the full-time jobs they need and want to support their families.

Once homeless, the parents described the following challenges to gaining stable housing: difficulties affording transportation to get to work, look for work, or attend school and job training programs; lack of affordable, safe, and dependable child care and after-school care; difficulties getting child support cases resolved; challenges accessing government funded social service programs (e.g., applying for cash assistance and other benefits); lack of knowledge of available resources and services; the high cost of living (including rent, utilities, food, and transportation); and a need for mental health services and supports to deal with anxiety and other stressful feelings and situations. Several parents spoke of the desire to keep their families together when homeless and of the hardship when programs do not allow fathers or sons to stay in the same location as mothers and daughters. A major concern for many parents is the lack of affordable housing in neighborhoods they feel are safe for their children—many worried that they would have to move from shelters to areas where they would encounter problems that would adversely affect their children.

The parents described several unmet needs that they and their children are facing: access to regular, preventive health care; relationship and marriage counseling; financial counseling and planning assistance; effective case management services from well-trained, knowledgeable program staff; and housing, job, and child care search assistance. They said that one thing that would make a significant difference to them was access to assistance and support before they become homeless, and it is "too late."

The parents also said their children are affected by the experience of being homeless. They want special child focused services and counseling as well as support at school for their children. Many feel their children know what is happening to their families and have to figure out how to deal with the issues they are facing at too young an age. Therefore, the children are having educational and behavioral challenges. Some parents think their children are depressed, and many expressed the need for their children to have the opportunities to play and "just be children."

Child and Family Homelessness: The Impact

Families become homeless for many reasons, including a lack of affordable housing, unemployment, limited access to resources and supports, health and mental health issues, and experiences of violence. The process of becoming homeless involves the loss of belongings, reassuring routines, community, and sense of safety.

Families experiencing homelessness are under considerable stress. They may move often, doubling up for a time in overcrowded situations with relatives or friends. Others stay in motel rooms or sleep in cars or campgrounds. Often, families must split up in order to find shelter.[14] Families must quickly adjust to difficult and uncomfortable circumstances that are often noisy, chaotic, unsafe, overcrowded, and lack privacy. Moving out of homelessness and into permanent housing requires resources often beyond the reach of many families.

Homelessness is a devastating experience that significantly impacts the health and well-being of adults and children.[15] The prevalence of traumatic stress in the lives of families who are homeless is extraordinarily high.[16]

Often members of homeless families have experienced ongoing trauma in the form of childhood abuse and neglect, domestic violence, and community violence, as well as the trauma associated with poverty and the loss of home, safety, and sense of security. These experiences may significantly impact how children and adults think, feel, behave, relate to others, and cope.

Homeless children often live in chaotic and unsafe environments. Dramatic life changes such as moving from place to place, family separations, and placement in foster care are common. The level of fear and unpredictability in the lives of homeless children can be extremely damaging to their growth and development. Children experiencing homelessness are four times more likely to show delayed development and twice as likely to have learning disabilities.[17] Homeless children demonstrate significant delays in gross motor skills, fine motor skills, and social and personal growth.[18]

Within a single year, 97 percent of homeless children move up to three times, 40 percent attend two different schools, and 28 percent attend three or more different schools.[19] One-third will repeat a grade in school.[20] Homeless children are 16 percent less proficient at reading and math than their peers.[21] Fewer than 25 percent of homeless children graduate from high school.[22] The constant barrage of stressful and traumatic experiences has profound effects on their development and ability to learn, ultimately affecting their success in life.

Children experiencing homelessness are more likely than other children to suffer from acute and chronic illnesses. Homeless children go hungry at twice the rate of other children.[23] Children who are homeless have three times the rate of emotional and behavioral problems, including high rates of anxiety, depression, sleep problems, shyness, withdrawal, and aggression.[24] Many worry that something bad will happen to their family members.[25] These factors combine to create a life-altering experience that inflicts profound and lasting scars.

Homeless mothers struggle with poor physical health compared to the general population. Over one-third have a chronic physical health condition.[26] For example, mothers who are homeless have ulcers at four times the rate of other women, and higher rates of asthma, anemia, and hypertension than in the general population.[27] Mothers experiencing homelessness struggle with mental health and substance use issues.[28] High rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among homeless and extremely poor women are well-documented.[29] In addition, current rates of depression in homeless mothers (52 percent) are four to five times greater than women overall (12 percent).[30] As a result of these challenges, women who are homeless and have experienced chronic trauma have considerable difficulty accessing help and support for themselves and their children.

The social costs of family homelessness are also significant. These include the more immediate costs of shelters, Medicaid, or health care for treating acute and chronic health conditions; mental health care and substance abuse treatment; police intervention; incarceration; and foster care. It costs taxpayers more money to place a family in emergency shelter than in permanent homes.[31] There are also "opportunity costs," representing the lost opportunities that stable housing would provide in terms of greater educational attainment, better health, stable employment, higher wages, and increased income. These carry not only personal, but social benefits through increased productivity, increased ability to purchase goods and services, and decreased unemployment and disability compensation.

Overwhelmed and Nowhere to Go

Denise is a single mother of four children ranging in age from four months to seven years old. She and her children have been living in a shelter for three months. Prior to arriving at this shelter, they lived at another shelter for two months, but had to leave because of time limits. Denise has family in the area, but she does not want to move in with them because she does not believe it would be a safe living environment for her children. She is scared about what will happen to her and her children when they leave the shelter. Moving from place to place has been very hard on all of them.

Striving for Economic Independence

Maria has six children—four who are with her in a shelter and two who are living with her mother. She had to leave her home twice after episodes of domestic violence. Maria gets child support from the father of her children, and has a job, but she cannot afford the cost of rent, which is higher than her income. She is trying her best to keep herself and her children out of harm's way and to make ends meet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Florida Campaign makes the following recommendations to begin to lay the path towards preventing and ending child and family homelessness throughout the state.

The recommendations are based upon a set of underlying assumptions: (1) Ending child homelessness in Florida is urgent and possible; (2) There must a stable, fully-funded continuum of housing options and services for children and their families; (3) All programs that serve homeless children and their families must be of the highest quality; and (4) Strong, ongoing coordination and collaboration among all stakeholders is required to ensure that resources are distributed effectively and strategically. These efforts must be coordinated across traditional areas of practice and government structures to provide an effective network of support and opportunity for children, youth, and families, so that not one child will be homeless in Florida for even one night.

Increase public awareness of the scope and impact of homelessness on children and families.

Raise awareness of the problem of child, youth, and family homelessness in Florida.
- Share information about the:
    » Scope, causes, and costs of child, youth, and family homelessness in urban, suburban, and rural areas of Florida.
    » Solutions to child and family homelessness as well as how to get involved and take action.
    » Available resources to help those experiencing homelessness.

Inform state and local policies and plans to address the needs of homeless children and families.

Provide critical State support for programs that assist homeless children, youth, and families to achieve stability.
- Maintain State funding through the State's budget process for:
    » Challenge Grants to prevent homelessness and provide supportive services to help families and youth exit homelessness.
    » Homeless Housing Assistance Grants to create new, affordable housing and transitional shelter units.
    » Local Coalition Staffing Grants to support the work

of homeless coalitions around the state.
- » Office on Homelessness activities to coordinate resources and programs statewide and work with the Council on Homelessness to develop policies and plans to end homelessness.
- Provide short-term, emergency financial assistance to families at-risk of eviction or loss of their home due to a financial crisis to prevent homelessness and avoid increased costs to the child welfare system.
- Reauthorize the transfer of funds from the Local Government Housing Trust Fund to support housing programs in the Department of Children and Families.
- Create a voluntary contribution option on Department of Motor Vehicle forms as a new revenue source to help fund homeless services.
- Designate the Lieutenant Governor as Chair of the Council on Homelessness and add at least three additional members to bring business and executive representation to the Council.
- Provide State agencies with opportunities to work together more effectively to flexibly use available funding and resources to prevent homelessness and help those who are homeless.
- Designate a state university to document the costs of homelessness on the State of Florida, including those incurred by law enforcement, courts, jails, and hospitals responding to those who are homeless to determine how to best allocate public funds to prevent and end homelessness.

Increase access to quality, safe, affordable housing for families with children as well as all youth who are homeless in Florida.
- Expand the supply of affordable housing units for homeless families with children, survivors of domestic violence, and homeless youth by removing the cap on the Sadowski Housing Trust Fund and allocating all funding generated for the Trust Fund to housing needs.
- Retain the state's affordable housing homeownership and rental programs.
- Increase the supply of rental housing to meet the demand of our lowest income families, preserve existing housing that has federal rental subsidies, and explore state rental assistance based on proven strategies from other states.
    » Remove the statutory limitations on the amount of revenue that can be deposited annually in the State and Local Government Housing Trust Funds.
    » Create a set-aside for housing assistance for special needs households, including youth aging out of foster care, within the State Apartment Incentive Loan program.
    » Specifically target housing assistance to serve households with extremely low incomes i.e. households earning 30 percent or less of the area median income.
    » Prioritize the use of available resources to preserve existing affordable housing projects that include federal rental assistance.

- » Develop viable strategies to be able to use foreclosed housing to safely house homeless families and individuals.
- Continue to address foreclosure issues under the State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program.

Increase the amount of income that youth and parents have to support themselves and their families.

- Require Workforce Florida to increase employment for homeless parents and youth, train and place homeless specialists in the One Stop Centers, and link essential child care and transportation services to enable access to jobs.
- Develop state incentives for the private sector to create jobs for homeless parents and youth, including tax credits to corporations hiring homeless parents and youth.

Prevent children and youth in foster care and youth who choose to age out of foster care between the ages of 18 and 21 from becoming homeless.

- Continue to avoid placing children in foster care based solely on their parents' or guardians' housing status.
- Remove barriers that prevent homeless unaccompanied youth from obtaining official documents such as a birth certificate, social security card, driver's license, and state identification card; from obtaining consent for or accessing medical/health services; from establishing a bank account; and from applying for food stamps and other benefits through the Department of Children and Families' ACCESS Florida online system so they can pursue educational and employment opportunities.
- Allow youth 18 or older the option of re-entering foster care after exit.
- Claim federal funds until age 21 through the Title IV-E state plan for the following categories of youth: those exiting foster care at 16 to guardianship or adoption and/or youth who remain in foster care from ages 18-21.
- Maintain extended foster care, adoption assistance, independent living services, and kinship guardianship assistance to all youth up to the age of 21.
- Continue to develop comprehensive, individualized, client-focused plans for children and youth exiting foster care that will promote age appropriate development in safe and supportive communities.
- Continue to invest in supportive housing for youth exiting the foster care system.
- Develop a comprehensive, statewide data collection and analysis system to improve the identification of homeless youth.

Improve programs and services to meet the unique needs of homeless children and families.

Ensure access to high quality services and care for families, children, and youth who are homeless.

- Implement the "Basic Principles of Care for Families and Children Experiencing Homelessness," outlined by The National Center on Family Homelessness, within all programs serving homeless families, youth, and children.

- Ensure that all programs serving homeless children, youth, and families are trauma-informed and recovery-oriented.
- Support and partner with the Florida Department of Education in increasing the number of homeless children and youth identified and receiving services by school districts under the education section of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
- Continue to provide information and technical assistance about the educational provisions of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to school personnel, parents, homeless service providers, domestic violence programs, Head Start programs, colleges and universities, the public, and others working and volunteering with children, youth, and families who are homeless.
- Ensure that housing and support programs serving children who are homeless have access to age appropriate child development resources, activities, curricula, counseling, and tutoring.
- Encourage community mental health centers to conduct outreach and provide prioritized, targeted prevention and early intervention services to homeless children, youth, and families who are at increased risk for mental health issues due to residential instability.
- Prioritize use of child care vouchers by families experiencing homelessness and survivors of domestic violence.

Increase coordination and collaboration among community organizations working to support families and children who are homeless.

- Provide opportunities for families, Continuum of Care members, homeless shelter staff, domestic violence shelter staff, homeless education liaisons, United Way's 211 staff, child welfare workers, youth and veterans' agency staff, and others in related organizations in regions throughout the state to network, coordinate, and collaborate to improve services for homeless children, youth, and families.

Provide professional development opportunities for people working to support children, youth, and families who are homeless.

- Provide training and technical assistance to people who work and volunteer in emergency shelters, school personnel, health and mental health care staff, police, firefighters, veterans' services workers, youth organization personnel, rural organization staff, and other people who provide services to children, youth, and families who are homeless.
  - » Offer a series of training opportunities on trauma, its impact on those who have experienced homelessness, and how to provide trauma-informed care.
  - » Build skills, enhance organizational capacity, and facilitate important collaboration and information exchange by including training on topics such as: developmental needs of homeless children, case management, motivational interviewing, self-care, and consumer involvement.

NEXT STEPS

As a state, we can no longer ignore the fact that 70,633 Florida children go without homes, food, access to health care, and educational opportunities each year. The cost is too great to our children and families and to our communities and state. Now is the time to end child and family homelessness.

The Florida Plan to End Child Homelessness offers specific recommendations to end child homelessness in three areas: (1) increased public awareness and action to end this growing problem; (2) stronger state and local policies and plans; and (3) improved programs and services for children and families. The Florida Campaign pledges to provide leadership in specific areas where we can have the greatest impact. We ask state leaders, service providers, advocates, and citizens to step forward in other areas where their leadership will be most effective.

We urge the Florida business community to become engaged in, advise, and support the Campaign's efforts. We also ask the philanthropic community to come to the table with financial support to implement the recommendations in this Plan that are aligned with their priorities.

No one is more important to the success of this Plan than the citizens of Florida. For too long, we have failed to acknowledge that children are homeless right here in our state. We want to change that, and it starts with you. Please tell your local and state leaders you will not tolerate thousands of children in Florida with no place to call home. Raise your voice with neighbors, church members, and friends. Your demand for action will fuel the Florida Campaign and inspire others to stand up with us. The solutions are clear. All we need is the will to make them happen.

Join the Florida Campaign to End Child Homelessness!
Email us at Campaign@familyhomelessness.org. Visit www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org for updates.

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8

America's Youngest Outcasts: A Call To Action

Children define our future and lay claim to our nation's conscience. But, over the years since child homelessness first surfaced in the 1980s, too little attention has been given to this tragedy. Who are these children and why are they homeless? What are their housing, health, and educational needs? How have states responded? What can we do differently?

The National Center on Family Homelessness researched and authored *America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness* to answer these questions and bring public attention to the plight of more than 1.5 million children who experience homelessness in the U.S. each year. The picture is not pretty:

- One in fifty American children experience homelessness annually.
- Homeless children are sick four times more often than other children.
- They go hungry at twice the rate of other children.
- They have three times the rate of emotional and behavioral problems.
- Homeless children are four times more likely to show delayed development and twice as likely to have learning disabilities.
- Fewer than 25 percent graduate from high school.

The findings in *America's Youngest Outcasts* were developed by considering the complex factors that contribute to child homelessness. The ranking of the states was based on a composite score for each state that represents four critical factors:

- Extent of Child Homelessness: The scope of the problem.
- Child Well-Being: Determined by food security, health outcomes, and educational proficiency.
- Risk for Child Homelessness: Based on state benefits, household structure, housing market factors, extreme poverty, and structural factors contributing to homelessness.
- State Policy and Planning: Assessing housing, income, education, and health policies as well as state planning activities related to child homelessness.

More than an analysis of the numbers and needs of homeless children, *America's Youngest Outcasts* is a call to action to end child homelessness before it becomes a permanent part of our national landscape. Achieving this goal demands a comprehensive understanding of the risks for child homelessness, careful and informed planning, increased resources that are dedicated to ending this problem, a skilled and dedicated workforce, and the will to make safe and decent housing a reality for all. The report spells out a policy framework for state and federal action. The complete document and an executive summary can be downloaded at www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org.

Campaign to End Child Homelessness

With the release of *America's Youngest Outcasts* in March of 2009, The National Center on Family Homelessness launched the Campaign to End Child Homelessness. The goals of the Campaign are to increase public awareness, inform policy solutions, share tools and best practices with community caregivers, and lead state and national advocacy efforts.

The Campaign is building on the findings and information from *America's Youngest Outcasts* to establish partnerships at national, state, and community levels to leverage this knowledge into action. We are connecting families, communities, service providers, advocates, policymakers, elected officials, and the media to address child homelessness through an array of coordinated activities.

From the U.S. Congress and the White House to State Houses and Town Halls across the country, we are mobilizing people to acknowledge that children are homeless tonight in virtually every community in America, and the time for action is now. Our interactive website, www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org, is a hub for learning, sharing opinion, and activity. As a nation, we can no longer ignore the fact that more than 1.5 million American children have no place to call home.

CAMPAIGN TO END CHILD HOMELESSNESS

Join the Florida Campaign to End Child Homelessness!
Email us at Campaign@familyhomelessness.org.
Visit www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org for updates.

Florida Coalition for the Homeless
The Florida Coalition for the Homeless is a dynamic organization whose membership and Board of Directors include homeless advocates, service providers, members of the faith-based community, formerly homeless people, educators, attorneys, mental health professionals, and many others statewide who are committed to putting an end to homelessness and improving the conditions of people living without shelter. The Florida Coalition for the Homeless strives to make homelessness one of the state's priorities. We accomplish this through: providing education on homelessness issues; advocating for initiatives that help homeless people and against laws and ordinances that may harm them; networking with advocates throughout Florida on federal, state, and local issues; and promoting unification, involvement, and leadership of local coalitions, service providers, homeless people, religious leaders, units of government, and others in the development and implementation of a statewide agenda. For more information, visit www.fchonline.org.

The National Center on Family Homelessness
The Campaign to End Child Homelessness is a project of The National Center on Family Homelessness which leads the effort to raise national awareness and galvanize action to ensure stable housing and well-being for families and children. The National Center learns what works and brings solutions to caregivers and policymakers that strengthen their capacity to help families in need. With the power of knowledge and the will to act, we will end family homelessness across America and give every child a chance. For more information, visit www.familyhomelessness.org.

FloRiDa CoaliTion FoR THE HoMELESS

Florida
CAMPAIGN

THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Family Homelessness

Exhibit 4

Homeless Students by Florida County

District	District Name	2009-2010 Homeless	2008-2009 Homeless	2007-2008 Homeless	2006-2007 Homeless	2005-2006 Homeless
01	Alachua	446	707	616	554	499
02	Baker	191	153	72	46	40
03	Bay	641	700	685	600	1,455
04	Bradford	122	<11	<11	<11	<11
05	Brevard	965	478	205	70	90
06	Broward	2,953	1,807	1,596	1,608	2,260
07	Calhoun	47	12	<11	13	37
08	Charlotte	441	376	366	498	663
09	Citrus	371	483	469	612	327
10	Clay	824	816	695	489	603
11	Collier	1,360	814	612	524	586
12	Columbia	380	423	89	61	67
13	Dade	4,268	2,581	2,382	2,203	490
14	Desoto	223	193	257	313	749
15	Dixie	60	12	15	16	12
16	Duval	947	2,144	1,931	1,663	1,509
17	Escambia	1,237	1,036	878	709	1,130
18	Flagler	246	166	71	<11	41
19	Franklin	126	140	110	<11	<11
20	Gadsden	713	689	725	555	409
21	Gilchrist	27	<11	<11	0	<11
22	Glades	18	<11	<11	<11	0
23	Gulf	<11	<11	<11	<11	42
24	Hamilton	342	251	236	258	287
25	Hardee	146	49	71	91	152
26	Hendry	139	74	95	148	<11
27	Hernando	242	207	156	265	98
28	Highlands	61	37	64	88	117
29	Hillsborough	3,124	2,054	2,073	2,051	818
30	Holmes	24	<11	<11	0	<11
31	Indian river	347	349	209	108	80
32	Jackson	119	182	139	96	37
33	Jefferson	<11	<11	<11	0	<11
34	Lafayette	141	105	89	146	92
35	Lake	2,162	778	324	195	122
36	Lee	1143	1,030	839	638	459
37	Leon	523	329	309	284	304
38	Levy	263	114	88	14	18
39	Liberty	22	23	16	11	12
40	Madison	57	89	43	35	28
41	Manatee	1,684	1,770	1,574	1,778	1,998

Exhibit 4

Homeless Students by Florida County

District	District Name	2009-2010 Homeless	2008-2009 Homeless	2007-2008 Homeless	2006-2007 Homeless	2005-2006 Homeless
42	Marion	1,691	1,675	1,060	941	715
44	Monroe	298	317	243	166	92
45	Nassau	145	54	105	53	58
46	Okaloosa	482	335	451	28	14
47	Okeechobee	203	130	60	147	162
48	Orange	1,324	2,467	1,811	817	121
49	Osceola	1,364	1,251	1,213	1,294	978
50	Palm Beach	1,960	1,339	801	1,479	1,729
51	Pasco	2,093	1,815	1,599	1,428	1,754
52	Pinellas	2,462	1,870	962	938	578
53	Polk	2,219	2,024	1,662	1,552	1,414
54	Putnam	720	623	525	615	807
55	St. Johns	344	149	86	46	0
56	St. Lucie	222	72	27	86	96
57	Santa Rosa	1,328	943	996	1,229	2,057
58	Sarasota	872	1,006	1,068	851	762
59	Seminole	1,322	1,008	632	616	829
60	Sumter	124	105	47	<11	<11
61	Suwannee	322	387	257	166	72
62	Taylor	73	101	75	<11	<11
63	Union	121	51	52	15	<11
64	Volusia	1,889	1,973	1,977	1,384	1,235
65	Wakulla	108	283	173	<11	20
66	Walton	40	36	316	211	320
67	Washington	165	22	0	<11	17
	Totals	**49,112***	**41,286***	**34,375***	**30,878***	**29,545***

*Number does not include count of homeless students identified in the university developmental research schools (PreK-12).

Source: Survey 5 Student Demographic Format and Federal State Indicator Format,
      Florida Department of Education, Automated Student Database System