



What's It Like to be Housing Insecure?

An Education Curriculum for Children and Teens

Presented by



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What's It Like to Face Homelessness?

Children experiencing homelessness are just like any other kids, except they do not have their own home. They have worries beyond their years—they worry that they will never have a stable home, they worry about where they will sleep at night, they worry about their parents, and they worry their friends might not understand what they are facing. They may have to skip meals and they do not have proper medical care. Some children might even see violence within their family.



Many children facing homelessness live in shelters. Shelters differ from place to place but they can be a room in a church or temple, school, or civic building. Despite the dedication of shelter volunteers and staff many shelters are noisy, too hot or cold, and crowded. A shelter is not a comfortable place to sleep. Children sleep in the same room as their parents, and sometimes even people they do not know. Bathrooms must be shared, often with everyone staying at the shelter. Children find it difficult to find a quiet place to do homework. It is often difficult to even go to school when living in a shelter.

Shelters are usually designed to provide people facing homelessness with a few weeks of emergency housing. As more families find themselves without a home, shelters must meet the demand and work to provide long-term housing for families with no other options. Once a shelter is full for the night, remaining families must live in cars or on couches of friends or relatives. This is not a sustainable living situation for children and families.

Why Do People Face Housing Insecurity?¹

There are many reasons why families may become housing insecure:

- Lack of affordable housing
 - Over 40% of renters in the US are cost-burdened (they spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs)²
 - Housing prices are rising while income levels are stagnant
 - Businesses and the government are building fewer low-cost units
 - The affordable housing crisis is worsening
- Low paying jobs and job loss
 - Low-income households are often unemployed or underemployed due to a changing labor market, limited education, etc.
- Health problems or a death in the family
 - The high cost of medical care can wipe out a family's savings when someone becomes seriously ill or dies
- Fleeing dangerous situations
 - Many mothers and children become homeless when they are forced to leave their homes to escape domestic violence
- Racial Disparities
 - Long-standing historical and structural racism continue to perpetuate racial group inequity, like redlining and systematic housing discrimination

When there aren't enough homes in a community, finding a home is like a game of musical chairs: the music stops and someone is left standing because there are more players than chairs. With housing, the people left standing are those with the least money.

The shortage of affordable rental housing worsened during the pandemic. Between 2019 and 2021, the shortage of affordable and rental homes for extremely low-income renters worsened by 500,000 units, or 8%.²

Young People on Their Own

Some children facing homelessness live without their parents or other adults to care for them. This may be the case because of:

- Problems with parents or stepparents, or parental abuse
- Family money problems caused by high rents, low wages, lack of health insurance, or loss of welfare benefits

When is a Young Person Considered Housing Insecure?

The McKinney-Vento Act defines youth and children facing homelessness as:³

- Children who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including children who are:
 - Sharing housing with other people due to a loss of housing
 - Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, etc. due to a lack of adequate alternatives
 - Living in emergency or transitional shelters
 - Abandoned in hospitals
 - Awaiting foster care placement
- Children and youth whose nighttime residence is a place not designed for a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
- Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, transport stations, etc.

Student's rights under the McKinney-Vento Act are as follows:⁴

- Immediate school enrollment and full participation in all school activities, along with access to programs and services
- Children and youth experiencing homelessness to remain in their school of origin
- Transportation to and from school of origin
- Rights and protections specifically for unaccompanied youth
- To dispute an enrollment decision and if resolved, to be admitted to the school
- Appointment of a local homeless education liaison in school districts to ensure equal services

Homelessness Hurts Families⁴

Homelessness has an impact on every part of a child's life: their sense of safety, education, health, and overall development.

- Most families facing homelessness are headed by a single mother and young children. The strength of mothers to find food and shelter for their children while also make a living often leads to struggles with mental health and illness.
- Children experiencing homelessness have increased risk of serious health problems, as well as emotional and behavioral problems.

How is Homelessness Harmful to Children?

Children who are facing homelessness fall sick more often⁵

Children who are facing homelessness get sick four times as often as children in middle class families. They have: ⁴

- Twice as many ear infections
- Four times as many asthma attacks
- Five times more diarrhea and stomach problems
- Six times as many speech problems
- 50% of housing insecure children have not seen a dentist in over a year

Children facing homelessness have more problems in school

Federal law requires that all children, regardless of their housing situation, have a right to free and appropriate education. These laws allow children facing homelessness to attend the same school they went to before they became housing insecure.

Often school administrators are not properly educated on laws protecting children facing homelessness or they are unaware that a student faces homelessness. This makes it easy for these children to fall through the cracks of the education system.

Despite the law (specifically the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act), many children are denied their right to an education for a variety of reasons:

- Some schools will not allow students to register without school and medical records.
- Some schools will not enroll students who do not have a home address.
- Students who are enrolled in school might not have transportation from a shelter to school

- Finding a place to sleep and food to eat, along with the rest of the daily struggles of homelessness, can cause schooling to be pushed aside.

Children experiencing homelessness who are fortunate enough to maintain regular attendance:⁵

- Have gaps in their education
- Have difficulty learning and focusing
- Are often 1-2 grades behind in reading and math
- Must repeat a grade twice as often as their classmates

Cost of Living in DuPage County⁶

In DuPage County, a single adult supporting two children (the most common family configuration facing homelessness in Bridge Programs) would need to earn more than **\$24.75 per hour**, working full time, to afford the most basic needs, relevant taxes, and permanent sustainable housing *without* being housing-cost burdened.

According to the HUD FY 2023 Illinois Fair Market Rent (FMR) Summary, a two-bedroom in the Chicago-Joliet-Naperville HUD Metro FMR Area currently rents for **\$1,714/month** (FY2024).

A single parent would need to make more than **\$4,287 per month** at a **\$24.75 hourly wage** - **\$51,440 annually** to afford a two-bedroom apartment independently and sustainably in DuPage County without being housing cost-burdened.

The current minimum wage is **\$14 per hour**, meaning a single parent in DuPage County would make **\$2,240/month** and **\$26,880 annually**, making them severely housing-cost burdened.

Resources in DuPage County



www.bridgecommunities.org



<http://www.dupagehomeless.org/>



<http://dupagepads.org/>



<https://www.metrofamily.org/>



<http://catholiccharitiesjoliet.org/>



<http://www.peoplesrc.org/>



<https://icnarelief.org/illinois-2/>



<http://www.helpaveteran.org/>



<https://211dupage.gov/>



<https://360youthservices.org/>



<https://www.loaves-fishes.org/>

Lesson Plans And Activities

Lesson Plan for Grades K-3

FLY AWAY HOME

Author: Eve Bunting

Publisher: Clarion

Video: Reading Rainbow

(P=Primary, I=Intermediate, P-I= both levels)

[Fly Away Home STORY \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

Theme:

Homelessness results from a variety of situations, and opportunities exist for people of all ages to make a difference in seeking solutions.

Program Summary:

The feature book is a touching story of a boy facing homelessness and his father who move from terminal to terminal in an airport, trying not to be noticed and discovered. The boy expresses frustration about homelessness, yet he has hope for the future.

In the video, narrator LeVar Burton describes the conditions of people facing homelessness and the root causes of homelessness. Scenes of families facing homelessness in shelters, on the streets, and staying in homes of friends and family are shown. The story *Fly Away Home* by Eve Bunting is read aloud.

Topics for Discussion:

(P-I) Before viewing, explore with the students the concept of “What is ‘home’?” What is needed in order to have a home? Who makes up a home?

(P-I) Obtain a copy of the book and read it to the students. The story presents opportunities for students to engage in some critical thinking: Why would it be hard to live in an airport? What would the challenging parts of not having your own home be? Why do the boy and his father dress in blue? What new problems will be created when it is time for Andrew to start school? What is the significance of the bird in the story?

(P-I) The boy and his father try to make themselves as inconspicuous as possible in the story. Consider other places. Besides an airport, what could be a “home” for someone facing homelessness; places where large groups of people pass through who are preoccupied with their own lives? What would that person have to do in order to remain unnoticed in that setting?

- (I) Discuss the variety of situations that might cause a family to face homelessness. Include in the discussion the understanding that living without a home is short term for some people, but may be long lasting for others.
- (I) After viewing the video, discuss different emotions that the youth who face homelessness on the video were experiencing (e.g., fear, anger, sadness, joy, envy, etc.) Have students identify circumstances under which these emotions might surface.

Curriculum Extension Activities:

(P-I) Create a semantic map of the work “home.” Begin with “home” as the center of the map. Brainstorm words connected with home and write them on lines radiating from the center. Have students justify their choice of words by explaining why certain words come to mind when they think of “home.”

(I) Have students collect news articles related to homelessness. Using information they gather, have students devise a plan for raising the awareness of people in their community about the issue of homelessness. Some examples are to organize a food collecting drive for the local food bank; collect mittens, hats, new underwear for children; collect quarters for using at the laundromat; have students collect coins as a donation to a homelessness charity.

(P-I) Have students research what other types of agencies exist in your community to help those facing homelessness. Invite an administrator from a homeless shelter to speak to the group about regulations, facilities, and needs of the shelter. Organize a fundraiser to collect money or items that the shelter can use to assist clients.

Adapted from
READING RAINBOW TEACHERS GUIDE
Program #116 – Fly Away Home
2005GPN/University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Lesson Plan for Grades 4-12

Time: 1 hour or more

Materials: -Facts about homelessness from pages of this Curriculum Resource Book to familiarize leader with facts about homelessness.

-One or more books from the Resource List (page 26)

-Appropriate age level resources from the National Alliance to End Homelessness website: www.endhomelessness.org (select "Fact Sheets for Kids" and choose your groups' age level, and print out the appropriate pages)



I. Facts About Homelessness and Discussion

A. Share with the students facts about homelessness.

B. Read or have a student read one of the selected books to group.

C. Discussion questions:

- What are some of the reasons people become homeless
- Have you ever met a person experiencing homelessness?
- How can you tell if a person is homeless?
- Do you know about any nearby shelters?
- If someone told you they were homeless what would you say?
- If you were homeless, where might you live?
- If you had nowhere to live, where would you go to school?

II. Activities

A. "My House" – page 16

B. "Where Do You Live" – page 15

C. "Musical Chairs" – page 17-18

III. What Can We Do To Help? – pages 28-29

Activity: What Would You Take?

Grade Level: 5th-12th

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: Pens and paper
Backpacks (optional)

Introduction: Discuss why people face homelessness

Discuss reasons people might need to vacate their home or apartment.

Activity: Present the following problem to the group:

1. You and your family must vacate your home.
2. You have only 10 minutes to choose what to take with you.
3. What you choose must fit into your backpack.

Start timing and have participants write down what they would choose. After 10 minutes elapse, process as a group:

- What did you choose to take? Why? What did you have to leave behind?
- How did it feel to make your choices?
- How will you do without the things you left behind?
- Where will you get the things you need but no longer have? Where will you keep these things?

Discuss more facts about homelessness with group.

Discuss ways to help people facing homelessness.

Collect the things you would have had to leave behind and donate them to a homelessness shelter (these are things other kids may have actually needed to leave behind if they were at risk of homelessness):

- Travel shampoo, lotions, soap
- Toothbrush & toothpaste
- Band-Aids
- Combs & brushes (new)



Activity: Where Do You Live?

Grade Level: 3rd – High School

Time: 1 hour or more

- Supplies:
- 2 or more large cardboard boxes (ask grocery store or an appliance store to save)
 - Tempera paints or poster-size markers
 - Paper and pencils
 - Flip chart or large paper

- Activities:
- Have students divide into 2 groups.
 - Each group imagines they are a family experiencing homelessness and the box is now their “home”.
 - Assign the following tasks:
 - Group 1. Your box will become your house.
 - Group 2. Your box will become a car in which your family will live.
 - Have each group assign someone to be the recorder and someone to be the reporter for their group.
 - Each group will discuss and write down the challenges of living in their new “home”.

Discussion Questions:

1. Is there room for everyone?
2. How do you sleep?
3. Where do you brush your teeth, bathroom, shower, etc?
4. Where do you do your homework?
5. Where do you eat?
6. Can your friends come over?
7. Where do you go to school?

- Have the groups reconvene and share their experiences. The reporters from each group report back to the large group while the leader writes on the flip chart.

Questions to ask large group:

- What were some of your feelings about being homeless before the activity?
- How do families facing homelessness face their situation and solve the challenges they experience?
- Has this changed your ideas on what it means to face homelessness?
- How can we use the lessons learned from this exercise to bring awareness about homelessness to others?

Activity: My House

Grade level: K-2

Time: 15 minutes

I like my house because:

My favorite room is:

My favorite things in my house are:

When I think of the word "home" these are the things I think of:

Activity: Musical Chairs

Grade Level: 1st-6th

Time: 30 minutes

- Materials:
- Two rows of chairs placed back-to-back, one less than the number of participants
 - CD player with music CDs
 - Copies of the following scenarios cut into individual slips.

#1 I'm 10 years old. My brothers are 6 and 7 and my sister is 2. It's just my mom and us kids. Landlords tell my mom they will not rent to families with more than 3 children. My uncle lets us sleep on the floor in his apartment. My brothers and I can't go to school because they say we don't live in that school district. Why can't I go to school like other kids?

#2 I'm 8 and my mom is a single mom. She works in a Laundromat and only makes \$14 per hour. The owner lets us sleep in the Laundromat at night because we don't have enough money to rent an apartment.

#3 I am 12 years old. My dad hurt his back last year and can't find a job. We have lots of medical bills. My mom works at Jewel, but doesn't earn enough for us to have our own apartment. We had to move out of our last apartment because we couldn't pay the rent. We live in our car now.

#4 My dad left us last year. I'm 9, Jennifer is 2 and the baby is 6 months old. The landlord told us we had to move out. My mom wants to work, but she has nobody to watch us so she can go out and look for a job. We live in our car. Sometimes my mom leaves us alone at McDonald's so she can go to an appointment. I try to do my homework there.

#5 I'm 7. My mom, my sister, and I live in our car. It's pretty crowded in there with all our clothes and everything. We have to find a different place every time we need to use the bathroom. I'm in school now, but I hope my friends don't find out that I live in our car. My best friend Matt wants to know if he can come over to play at my house. What am I supposed to tell him?

#6 I'm in eighth grade. We've moved so many times, I've gone to 10 different schools. I'm not a very good reader, and I have a lot of trouble understanding math. I get mad a lot at school, and I'm always in trouble. You'd be mad, too, if you didn't get to stay in one place long enough to make friends. I just wish we could have a house with a backyard where I could play. Then maybe I could catch up at school and have my friends over.

Instructions: While music is playing have students walk around the chairs. When the music stops, have students find a chair on which to sit. The student left standing is the “person experiencing homelessness”. Have that student choose a scenario and read it to the rest of the group. Repeat until all the scenarios have been given out.

Discussion: Have group process their thoughts and feelings about the situations they heard about.

Talk about ways the people in each scenario could find help.

Discuss ways the students could help people in similar situations.

Activity: The “Haves” and “Have Nots”

Grade Level: 4th Grade and Up

Time: 30 minutes

Goal: To build the highest structure possible using only paper.

Materials: Sufficient supply of papers varying in size and sturdiness. *Suggestions:* construction paper, computer paper, newspaper, cardboard, cardstock, etc.

Instruction: The object of this activity is to expose the participants to the reality that everyone has a variety of resource given to us in life and it is what we do with our resources that determines how we succeed.

The group should be divided into teams depending on how many different types of paper are available. Each team is given one type of paper. A timer is set up with an amount of time in which the groups must make their structure (the time limit may vary depending on the age of the participants.) Time is the only rule. The most important lessons in this activity are how the teams work with what is given to them and how they work together as a team to solve the problem.

The leader should act as if all of the materials are equal and fair. Let teams know that there will be a prize for the winner.

Discussion: After the activity, the teams come back together as a large group. Each team discusses what the process was like for them. The leader should encourage the group to discuss feelings of frustration, pride, accomplishment, resentment, etc.

Questions:

- How did it feel to be the team with the worse materials?
- What was it like to watch the team with “better” building materials? Did it make you want to give up or try harder and be more creative?
- How did the team with the best materials or the better ideas for building a strong structure feel?
- Did any team help another team? Did teams share ideas with other teams? Why or why not?
- What were your frustrations working within your team?

- How does this activity relate to real life? What resources does your family have that make life easier for you? Which resources do you take for granted? (Do your parents own a house? A car? Did they go to college? Do you always have enough to eat? To wear?)
- Think about others who might not have as many resources as you.
- How would it affect you if you shared some of what you have with those who have less?
- What could you do to help others?

Follow-up:

What could we do as a group to help others who are less fortunate?

Activity: Scavenger Hunt

Grade Level: Middle School/High School

Time: Several Hours

Your team is a family experiencing homelessness living in _____(city).
Your team must decide on who the members of your family are and the
ages of the children.

Your goal is to find the following items and
return "home" by _____(time).

Find the following items:

- _____ 1. Train/bus schedule.
- _____ 2. Listing of apartments for rent in your town. (**bonus points for the
cheapest apartment)
- _____ 3. Can you get a library card without an address? Find out: _____.
- _____ 4. Job "want-ads."
- _____ 5. Address for the local food pantry _____.
(**bonus points for more than one)
- _____ 6. Employment application for a job. What is the pay rate? _____.
How will you get to work? _____
- _____ 7. Free museum brochure.
- _____ 8. Phone number of county human services _____.
- _____ 9. Phone number of township offices _____.
What services and assistance do they provide?
- _____ 10. Where & How can you apply for a free e-mail account? _____.
Where can you check your e-mail?
- _____ 11. Where would you find cardboard boxes to build a shelter? _____.
- _____ 12. Where could you go to exercise or workout? _____.
- _____ 13. Where could you take a shower without being thrown out? _____.
- _____ 14. Where could you receive your mail? _____.
- _____ 15. Where do you brush your teeth and use the bathroom before school?
- _____ 16. Collect sale coupons for the grocery store.
- _____ 17. Where do you apply for food stamps? _____.
- _____ 18. Address of the health clinic _____.

- ___ 19. Information about opening a checking account. What is the minimum \$ to open an account? _____
- ___ 20. Used car dealer ad.
- ___ 21. Where could you buy a cheap bike? _____.
- ___ 22. Where is the nearest thrift store(s)? _____.
- ___ 23. Where is there a public telephone? _____.
- ___ 24. Where are the shelters for people facing homelessness?
_____.
- ___ 25. Where can you wash your clothes? What will it cost? _____.
- ___ 26. You have \$20 to feed your "family." Remember:
- You do not have anywhere to cook food;
 - Will the food you purchase fill you up?
 - What is the nutritional value of the food?
 - **Bring food back to starting place;**
 - **Get a receipt;**
 - Spend wisely, be creative, and include tax.

Extra challenge: **Bonus points for collecting coats, shoes, blankets!

RULES:

1. You may complete this list in any order you wish.
2. The whole group must stay together.
3. Number 27 is REQUIRED.
4. Your team bag includes a pen, paper, and \$20 for food.
5. Your driver is a chauffeur; not part of your team.
6. RETURN TO YOUR STARTING POINT BY _____(time).
7. Be careful, have fun, and remember you represent your _____(group).

Activity: Privilege Monopoly⁴

Grade Level: High school and up

Time: 30 minutes-3 hours (game can be shortened)

Goal: This game places participants at different privilege levels and works to teach the participants about systematic poverty.

Materials: Monopoly games—a large group will be divided into groups of four to play the game.

Rules:

1. Use a random number generator for each player, assigning them a number 1-3 and give them the corresponding playing piece.
2. The hat goes first. When it is your turn, roll both dice and move the appropriate number of spaces.
3. You get another turn if you roll doubles. If you roll doubles three times, you go to jail.
4. You must exit Jail in 1 turn. Once you are in jail you can either use a Get Out of Jail Free card or you can pay \$50
5. All money gets paid to the bank (You DO NOT get any money for landing on Free Parking, it is just a resting spot in this game)
6. You only need to buy three houses to upgrade to a hotel. Hotel property price is the same as what is on the property card.
7. If you land on a property not owned, you might be able to buy it (check your piece rules). If you land on a property already owned, you must pay the owner.
8. A property without houses or hotels can be sold to any player as a private transaction at any time for any amount the owner can get.
9. You can sell houses and hotels back to the bank for half price.
10. As long as a property you own doesn't have houses or hotels, you can mortgage it to the bank. You get the mortgage value printed on the Title Deed card. Once it is mortgaged, you can't collect any rent for the property until you pay the mortgage plus 10% interest. If someone else wants to buy the property from you, you can sell it as a private transaction at any price you agree on. Then, the new owner can pay the mortgage plus 10% interest to start receiving rent for it.
11. No player may borrow money from another player.
12. No player may dispute a decision of the banker (the hat).

To find the winner, add up: all cash, purchase price of property, utility, and railroad owned; houses and hotels valued at purchase price.

Rules for the Shoe - 3

1. You can buy the following properties: Purple, Light blue and Pink (plus Railroads and utilities)
2. If you ever roll a 6 (on either die), you must go directly to jail.
3. The Shoe represents a person experiencing homelessness.

Rules for the Hat - 1

1. You are the banker. You must keep personal funds separate from those of the Bank.
2. You manage all the property cards and collect the money when these cards are purchased. When the other players buy property, remember that:
 - The **car** can buy any property EXCEPT green or blue
 - The **shoe** can ONLY buy purple, light blue, or pink properties plus railroads and utilities
 - **You** can buy any property you wish
3. You also collect all fines and taxes and you give out the \$200 salary to each player as he/she passes Go.
 - You think that the shoe is lazy and doesn't always deserve \$200. Occasionally, only give him/her \$150. If the shoe complains, threaten to take away his/her property.
4. Help keep an eye on the **Shoe**, if he/she ever rolls a 6 (on either die), he/she must go directly to jail.

Rules for the Car/Thimble - 2

1. You can buy any property you wish EXCEPT **green** or **blue**.
2. Help keep an eye on the **Shoe**, if he/she ever rolls a 6 (on either die), he/she must go directly to jail.

Discussion:

- **What does the random number generator represent?**
- How did it feel to be your player?
- What emotions did you feel during this game?
- Were you able to overcome your disadvantage?
- How does this relate to the real world?
- Have you ever witnessed this inequality in action?
None of these players in the game represent a bystander. What role do you think they could play? What action could they take?

Activity: Calculate It!

Grades: 3rd -12th

Time: 15-30 minutes

It costs a family about \$1,714 rent per month for a 2-bedroom apartment in the Chicago-Joliet-Naperville HUD Metro FMR Area.

Family #1	Family #2
\$ The starting wage for a job at McDonald's is about \$14.00 per hour. How much will you earn if you work a 40-hour week?	\$ Suppose you have a better paying job and make \$25.00 per hour. How much will you earn if you work a 40-hour week?
\$ How much will you earn in a month?	\$ How much will you earn in a month?
\$ How much will you have left over after you pay you rent? This needs to cover your food, clothing, child care costs, medical bills, gasoline, car payment, etc.	\$ How much will you have left over after you pay you rent? This needs to cover your food, clothing, child care costs, medical bills, gasoline, car payment, etc.
\$ If you do not have enough money left over to pay your bills, what will you do? List below.	\$ If you do not have enough money left over to pay your bills, what will you do? List below.

Calculate It! **Answer Page**

It costs a family about \$1,714 rent per month for a 2-bedroom apartment in the Chicago-Joliet-Naperville HUD Metro FMR Area.

Family #1	Family #2
<p>\$ The starting wage for a job at McDonald's is about \$14.00 per hour. How much will you earn if you work a 40-hour week?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$560.00</p>	<p>\$ Suppose you have a better paying job and make \$25.00 per hour.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$1,000.00</p>
<p>\$ How much will you earn in a month?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$2,240</p>	<p>\$ How much will you earn in a month?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$4,000.00</p>
<p>\$ How much will you have left over after you pay you rent? This needs to cover your food, clothing, child care costs, medical bills, gasoline, car payment, etc.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$526</p> <p>On average, Illinois residents pay about \$450 in income taxes per month.</p>	<p>\$ How much will you have left over after you pay you rent? This needs to cover your food, clothing, child care costs, medical bills, gasoline, car payment, etc.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$2,286</p>
<p>\$ If you do not have enough money left over to pay your bills, what will you do? List below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Move in with relatives or friends; - Share our apartment with others who are also working to share living costs; - Move into a shelter; - Get a second job 	<p>\$ If you do not have enough money left over to pay your bills, what will you do? List below.</p> <p>Using possible answers in the left column, discuss other possibilities, i.e.: what bills won't be paid; what will happen if you need to go to the doctor; how will you pay school fees; etc.</p> <p>How would your expenses and options for housing change if you had more than one child?</p>

Resource List

Books

A Place to Stay: A Shelter Story by Erin Gunti and Esteli Meza
A Shelter in Our Car by Monica Gunning
Fly Away Home by Eve Bunting
Saturday at the Food Pantry by Diane O’Neill
Still a Family: A Story about Homelessness by Brenda Reeves Sturgis
The Hundred Dresses by Eleanor Estes
Those Shoes by Maribeth Boelts
Yard Sale by Eve Bunting and Lauren Castillo
Where Can I Build My Volcano? by Pat Van Doren
What is Given from the Heart by Patricia C. McKissack

Websites

www.bridgecommunities.org

Bridge Communities

[Talk About It: For Children Not Experiencing Homelessness - Sesame Workshop](#)

Sesame Workshop Resources on Homelessness for Children

www.naehcy.org

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children & Youth

www.endhomelessness.org

National Alliance to End Homelessness

<https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/how-kids-and-teens-can-help/>

Coalition For the Homeless: How Kids and Teens can Help

[Homelessness - Students | Britannica Kids | Homework Help](#)

Britannica Kids: Homelessness

Videos

“Fly Away Home” from Reading Rainbow - [Fly Away Home STORY \(youtube.com\)](#)

Sleep Out Client Testimony – [What Sleep Out Saturday Means to a Bridge Communities Client 2022 \(youtube.com\)](#)

Sesame Street video that introduces Lily, a Muppet facing homelessness - [A Rainbow Kind of Day \(youtube.com\)](#)

How can we help Families Facing Homelessness?

Children facing homelessness have a lot of courage. Every day they try to overcome the fear and sadness of losing their homes. Mothers and Fathers dealing with homelessness love their children. They are committed to holding their families together through the troubles of housing insecurity. **The strength of families facing homelessness should inspire us all to help in any way we can.**

Some Ways You Can Help

Volunteer:

- *Volunteer at a shelter. Call local shelters to find out ways you can help.
- *Invite people experiencing homelessness to a community event, etc.
- *Organize or assist at an event at a shelter such as a holiday party.
- *Volunteer at Bridge Communities.

Contribute:

- *Collect toys, books, games, and clothing for donations.
- *Hold supply drives for diapers, quarters for the laundromat, school supplies, etc.
- *Create survival kits that include shampoo, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, etc.
- *Raise funds for a program. Have a walk-a-thon, or yard sale and donate the proceeds.
- *Become aware of your language. Minimize language that refers to people who face homelessness in derogatory ways. By using expressions such as, “people experiencing homelessness” rather than labels such as “bums,” “transient,” or even “the homeless,” we remind ourselves that people who are in such situations are people first – just people who are going through a difficult period in their lives.
- *Raise money for summer camp scholarships or to help pay for a tutor for a student experiencing homelessness.
- *Donate food to a food pantry.

*Collect hats, mittens, and coats.

*Collect quarters for the laundromat. Donate to families experiencing homelessness.

Advocate:

*Write letters to your elected officials about the issue of homelessness.

Continue to educate yourself, your family and your community:

*Share what you find out about homelessness with those around you.

*Talk to your family and friends about homelessness.

*Follow your local news.

*Take advantage of teachable moments. When you see others acting in insulting ways toward someone who is homeless, share your compassionate and informed view on the difficult circumstances and obstacles facing people experiencing homelessness.

*Teach your friends about homelessness.

Whatever you do, don't let the insights you gain stop with you!

Volunteer Opportunities for the Neighborhood Food Pantry

JANUARY: Organize a “Souper Bowl” collection of different kinds of soup. Have a competition between grades or groups of children. The group that collects the most wins a candy “Super Bowl” ring.

FEBRUARY: Write a valentine that can be included in the food pantry box of food. Donate \$5 that you earned so the family receiving the box can purchase their own candy.

MARCH or APRIL: As a family, purchase a meal for a spring meal basket.

MAY: Include packets of flower and vegetable seeds in the boxes of food given at the food pantry. Also, packets can be given to your neighbors for planting in their home gardens and harvested for the food pantry.

JUNE, JULY, and AUGUST: Bring the fresh fruits and vegetables you grew in your garden to the food pantry to share.

AUGUST: Collect school supplies for families coming to the food pantry or for families in Bridge Communities’ transitional housing program.

SEPTEMBER: Collect jars of peanut butter and jelly.

OCTOBER: Include a bag of Halloween candy and a bag for the children to take trick-or-treating for food pantry donation boxes.

NOVEMBER: As a family, purchase a meal for a Thanksgiving food basket.

DECEMBER: As a family, purchase a meal for a holiday food basket.

ANYTIME: Collect items for CHILDREN’S BIRTHDAY PARTY BOXES for families who face homelessness. Include cake and frosting mix, plates, napkins, candles, gifts and games.



About Bridge Communities

Bridge Communities is a dynamic, grassroots, non-profit organization committed to transforming the lives of families facing homelessness through partnering with talented, resourceful individuals and groups in our community. Our program of housing, mentoring, and empowering families focuses on moving them towards a goal of self-sufficiency and serves 100+ families every year.



The problems Bridge Communities addresses are homelessness, underemployment, unemployment, skill deficiencies, lack of education, parenting issues, and debt management. The objectives of the Bridge Program are:

- Secure an improved employment status therefore increase earned income
- Reduce debt and improve credit rating
- Teach clients how to better utilize resources through life-skills mentoring
- Improve the client's and their children's educational opportunities
- Secure permanent housing upon completion of the program

Bridge Communities has helped hundreds of families achieve self-sufficiency and permanent housing. Comprehensive surveys show that 90-95% of families develop the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain permanent, stable housing and employment, stabilize or decrease their debt, and improve their education level.

The mission of Bridge Communities is to transition families facing homelessness to self-sufficiency by working with partners to provide mentoring, housing, and supportive services.

Bridge Communities, Inc. Value Statements

Through the help of our program partners and supporters, Bridge Communities provides free transitional housing to more than 100 DuPage County families facing homelessness each year. During the two years each family spends in our program, they are able to save money, learn budgeting skills, and obtain better employment, so they can live self-sufficiently once they graduate.

Mission: The mission of Bridge Communities is to transition families facing homelessness to self-sufficiency by working with partners to provide mentoring, housing, and supportive services.

Vision: Our vision is a community where all families are healthy, financially stable, and living in affordable housing.

Values: Each of our core values—Partnership, Empowerment, Integrity, Respect, Hope—apply to everyone involved in Bridge Communities – clients, mentors, program partners, volunteers, donors, board members, staff, and community.

Resources Cited

1. National Alliance to End Homelessness, [What Causes Homelessness? - National Alliance to End Homelessness](#)
2. National Low Income Housing Coalition, [THE GAP: The Affordable Housing Gap Analysis 2021 \(nlihc.org\)](#)
3. U.S. Department of Education, McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth, [Federal Education for Homeless Children and Youths \(EHCY\) Program Profile](#)
4. DuPage Federation, [DuPage Federation Homelessness Report 2017.pdf \(impactdupage.org\)](#)
5. Adapting Your Practice, General Recommendations for the Care of Homeless Patients, <http://www.nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/GenRecsHomeless2010.pdf>
6. Bridge Communities Annual Report Recommendations 2023

IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT POVERTY AND HOMELESSNESS

- The major causes of family homelessness are lack of affordable housing, low paying jobs and job loss, health problems or a death in the family, the forced flee of dangerous situations, and racial disparities. Generational poverty, underemployment, lack of marketable job skills, divorce, and high debt are also large contributors to family homelessness.
- More than 37 million people in the USA live in poverty.¹
- In no state, metropolitan area, or county in the U.S. can a full-time worker earning the federal minimum wage, or the prevailing state or local minimum wage afford a modest two-bedroom rental home at fair market rent.²
- A minimum wage worker earning \$14/hr would have to work 71 hours to afford a modest 1-bedroom home at Fair Market Rent.
- There are 62,873 DuPage County residents living in poverty.³
- In DuPage County, a single adult supporting two children (the most common family configuration facing homelessness in Bridge Programs) would need to earn more than \$24.75 per hour, working full time, to afford the most basic needs, relevant taxes, and permanent sustainable housing *without* being housing-cost burdened.⁴
- Last year, 3,232 DuPage County students identified as McKinney-Vento students, meaning they lacked a fixed, regular, adequate nighttime residence.
- The average age of a child facing homelessness in Bridge Communities' Transitional Housing Program is just under 8 years old.⁵
- Graduates of the 2023 Bridge Communities program improved their financial stability, with monthly median income growing from \$2,286 to \$3,284.⁵
- In 2023, Bridge Communities provided safe, stable housing, mentoring and supportive programs for 105 families. Included in these families were 205 children and 111 adults.⁵
- Since 1988, through the support of volunteers and donors like you, nearly 800 families are living self-sufficiently. They can maintain stable housing and employment and meet their basic needs after completing Bridge Communities two-year Transitional Housing Program.⁵

Sources:

1. [Poverty Facts \(povertyusa.org\)](https://www.povertyusa.org/)
2. [Out of Reach: Illinois | National Low Income Housing Coalition \(nlihc.org\)](https://www.nlihc.org/out-of-reach-illinois)
3. <https://www.welfareinfo.org/poverty-rate/illinois/dupage-county/>
4. Bridge Communities 2024 Annual Report Recommendations
5. [Program Statistics | Bridge Communities](#)
6. [State of Homelessness: 2021 Edition - National Alliance to End Homelessness](#)