



## **FACT SHEET: Effects of Homelessness on Children**

According to San Francisco's Plan to Abolish Chronic Homelessness (2004), approximately 15,000 people are homeless in the city and county. Nationally, families and children comprise 40 percent and children 27 percent of the homeless population.<sup>1</sup> Applied locally, these percentages indicate that approximately 6,000 of San Francisco's homeless people are families, 4,050 of them children. By all accounts, children are among the fastest growing segments of the homeless population.

Nationally, 35 percent of homeless families are in emergency or transitional shelters, with the remainder staying temporarily with families or friends, or living in motels, cars, campgrounds and other inadequate situations.

Extreme poverty and homelessness can have devastating and long-term effects on every facet of a child's life, with a strong statistical potential to inhibit physical, emotional, cognitive, social, and behavioral development.<sup>2</sup>

- Children make up over 4,000 of the estimated 15,000 homeless people in San Francisco County.
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- Most children residing in family shelters are under 5 years old.<sup>3</sup>
- 27% of the U.S. homeless population is comprised of children.<sup>4</sup>
- Families and children comprise 40% of the U.S. homeless population.<sup>5</sup>
- Poverty and homelessness has devastating and long term effects on every facet of a child's life, with strong statistical potential to inhibit development.
- When children are homeless, they are twice as likely to repeat a grade.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Laura Waxman and Sharon Hinderliter, 1996. A Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in America's Cities, 1996 Washington DC US Conference of Mayors

<sup>2</sup> Hart-Shegos, Ellen, 1999, "homelessness and its Effects on Children." Family Housing Fund

<sup>3</sup> SF Plan to Abolish Chronic Homelessness (2004) Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation

<sup>4</sup> SF Plan to Abolish Chronic Homelessness (2004) Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation

<sup>5</sup> SF Plan to Abolish Chronic Homelessness (2004) Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation

<sup>6</sup> US Department of Education, 1999 Better Homes Fund

- Nearly 30% of homeless children go to three or more schools a year.<sup>7</sup>
- There are more than 6000 homeless families on any given night in San Francisco.
- 45% of homeless children don't attend school regularly.<sup>8</sup>
- Children and youth in homeless situations experience developmental delays that hamper academic achievement at four times the rate of children in the general population and are four times more likely to have behavioral disorders, three times more likely to show signs of a learning disability, and eight times more likely to show signs of developmental problems.<sup>9</sup>
- They suffer emotional and behavioral problems that affect learning at almost three times the rate of housed children.
- Kids are the fastest growing segment of San Francisco's homeless population.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> US Department of Education, 1999 Better Homes Fund

<sup>8</sup> SF Unified School District: There are twice as many children (45%) in homeless-support programs in the city than homeless children and youth attending school during 2003-2004 academic year.

<sup>9</sup> Zima, D.T. February 1997, "Sheltered Homeless Children: Their Eligibility and Unmet Need for Special Education Evaluations." American Journal of Public Health. 87(2)

<sup>10</sup> SF Plan to Abolish Chronic Homelessness (2004) Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation