

Chicago Public Schools

Service Learning



Introduction

Homelessness continues to be a major problem in Chicago and around the country. While many people believe that homelessness is a problem that individuals bring on themselves, in reality, there are many systemic barriers to individuals and families finding, securing and holding on to appropriate housing. In order to solve the problem of homelessness, we must first understand its root causes, some of which are the lack of affordable housing, lack of living wage jobs, and wage disparities. As students and teachers seek out shelters and other organizations that work with people who are homeless for service projects, they should also explore the issues that lead to homelessness and tie that learning to classroom curriculum. This resource guide will help you do that.

Many CPS students have earned Service Learning credit by working at shelters or soup kitchens, or conducting food and clothing drives. The purpose of this curriculum guide is to connect these important experiences with academic content. This guide can assist classroom teachers who want to prepare students for a service project that addresses the problems of housing and homelessness. The guide includes facts and figures, causes and solutions, as well as laws and policy that impact the problem of homelessness. Additionally, activities, resources, and service project ideas are included.

The curriculum guide is designed to connect these important experiences with academic content. It is divided into six sections:

- √ The problem of homelessness
- √ The causes of homelessness
- √ Activities to explore and understand homelessness
- √ Service project ideas
- √ Resources (people, websites, organizations, additional curriculum)
- √ Classroom connections
- √ Links to Illinois State Standards

Please use this guide as you see fit. Many of the enclosed activities are inquiry-based. They require that student seek out information and learning on their own or as part of a team. The results of their research can further enrich the learning experience for other students in the class.

Examining the issue of homelessness can help students to:

- √ Provide students an opportunity to deal with a current issue of concern in Chicago and the nation and to dispel myths about people without homes.
- √ Give students a chance to make a contribution toward ending homelessness.
- √ Sensitize students to be more accepting of students in their school who might be without a home.
- √ Provide opportunity for schools to interact with the community to establish cooperative partnerships to assist those who are homeless.

The Problem of Homelessness

WHAT is homelessness?

The condition of someone who lives on the street, or in an abandoned building, or any place not meant for human habitation or the condition of someone who has no regular place to live.

WHO is homeless?

Use the following information to create a circle graph depicting the homeless.

1. 5 percent are physically disabled
2. 4 percent are elderly men
3. 4 percent are looking for work
4. 8 percent are working at part-time and low-paying jobs
5. 14 percent are mentally impaired
6. 23 percent are women
7. 22 percent are veterans
8. 15 percent are children
9. 5 percent do not fall in any of the above groups

Statistics Source: James D. Wright, Tulane University - Fall 1989

Activity from: William Penn University Homelessness Resource Guide

HOW big is the problem?

- √ Every night in the U.S. about 750,000 people experience homelessness.
 - In a year, between 2.5 and 3.5 MILLION people experience homelessness for some period.
- √ Over the course of the year, families with children make up about half of the homeless population.
- √ In Chicago, 200,000 households earn less than 30 percent of the area median income (about \$21,000 for a family of four). Only 38,000 affordable units are available to those households.
- √ Nationally, there are about 150,000 chronically homeless people.
- √ Approximately 166,000 people experience homelessness in the Chicago area each year.
- √ People are homeless, on average, six months.
- √ Over the course of a year approximately 26,000 youth in Illinois experience homelessness.

Sources:

National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2000
National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2000

HOW can we solve the problem?

While there are systemic or underlying factors that cause homelessness, there are also solutions to the problem of homelessness that are systemic.

- ✓ People who do not have homes must be able to obtain housing. *Conduct a study of housing costs in the neighborhood to see how much housing stock is affordable to moderate income families.*
- ✓ People must have incomes adequate to meet their basic needs. *Calculate what level of income is adequate to meet the basic needs of a family of four. Measure that against the minimum wage and against living wage proposals being considered in Chicago.*
- ✓ Many people need help to overcome the problems which interfere with their independent living. *Consider the personal challenges that a person or family might face that might lead to homelessness.*

The CAUSES of Homelessness

Lack of Affordable Housing

- √ In Chicago, a worker must work 133 hours at minimum wage (\$5.15) just to afford a 2 bedroom unit at area's fair market rent (not including utilities, etc).
- √ In Illinois, a worker must work 116 hours for such a unit.
- √ In NO state today does a full-time minimum wage job enable a family to pay fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment!

Lack of Living-Wage Jobs/Income Support

- √ 20% of homeless adults work full or part time.
- √ According to the 2001 self-sufficiency standard, a family of 2 adults and 2 small children would need to earn \$47,074 per year to pay for all their living expenses (housing, medical care, food, etc.) without any government assistance.

Wage disparity

- √ In 2000, women working full-time made 73% of what men learned, African American women earned 64% of what white men earned, and Latino women 52% of what white men earned.

Lack of Jobs

- √ The Midwest Job Gap program predicted that, in 2000, 114 people were seeking every one job that paid a living wage (\$25,907 for a family of four, which includes basic necessities and work-related expenses).

Public Benefits

- √ No general increase in the level of the TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) grant has occurred in 11 years.
- √ Single adults w/o children cannot receive cash assistance in IL.

Lack of Healthcare and Supportive Services

- √ In 2000, 14% of the U.S. population did not have health insurance.
- √ 29.5 percent of poor people had no health insurance.
- √ 20-25% of homeless adults have serious mental illness.
- √ 34% of homeless adults suffer from a substance problem.

**All information on this page from Chicago Coalition for the Homeless



Events that can lead to homelessness:

- factory closings
- apartments converted to condominiums
- gov't assistance programs ended or changed
- death of family member
- separations in families
- job loss
- untreated mental health problems
- lack of health insurance for emergency or chronic illness

PROBLEM BASED LEARNING ACTIVITY

Individually, or in small groups, here is your chance to research the problems and solutions to homelessness. Your task is to identify resources and organizations that are available to these individuals.

Veterans:

I'm a Vietnam vet. I've tried to put it all behind me, but sometimes I just breakdown. I've been fired from my job several times. I wish there was someone I could turn to. The friend I was staying with got back together with his wife, so I can't sleep there anymore. I have nowhere to stay and no one will hire me because of my history. I've only got about \$200 in savings.

You need the following:

- √ A place to stay
- √ Mental health counseling
- √ A job of some sort

Women with Children:

I just loaded everything in my car and drove 600 miles to escape my abusive ex-boyfriend. I'm pregnant with our 2nd child and my doctor instructed me to work no more than 4 hours a day because of health problems. My son and I have been sleeping in the car for 2 weeks because the shelters are full, and no one will hire me part-time because I don't have daycare for my son.

You need the following:

- √ A place to stay
- √ Job training
- √ Domestic abuse counseling
- √ Daycare
- √ A medical checkup

Runaway Youth:

I'm 14 years old. I ran away from home 4 months ago to get away from Dave, my stepdad. He used to hit me and he always yells. The first time I left, the social worker brought me back because Dave promised things would change. The threats and beatings only got worse after that. So I bought a bus ticket. It's hard being on the street, especially because I'm a minor so they won't let me stay in a shelter. I try to stay out of trouble but I'm running out of cash. My friends here say the easiest way to make money is to sell drugs - or myself.

You need the following:

- √ A place to sleep
- √ Education
- √ Legal and abuse counseling

People with Mental Illness:

I suffer from major depression. My insurance doesn't cover mental health services, and I can't afford the counseling and medication I need. I was a bus driver for 12 years until I got fired last month because I missed so much work. Often it's just too hard to get out of bed, much less leave the house. My rent is a month overdue, so my landlord is angry. My only family now is my ex-wife and kids in Florida, but I can't go to them for help. It's totally helpless.

You need the following:

- √ Counseling
- √ Medication
- √ Job
- √ (Mental) health insurance
- √ A support system

***This activity prepared by National Alliance to End Homelessness.*

Additional Activities

Use the four scenarios on the previous page to complete the following activities.

A. Discussion/activity

1. Identify the point at which each person or family actually became homeless.
2. Go back and list the series of events that led to homelessness.
3. What other choices could have been made at different points?
4. What things in each case were beyond the control of the family or individual?

B. Research these terms

- √ Section 8/Public Housing
- √ Welfare Reform
- √ Health Care for the Homeless
- √ Supportive Housing
- √ McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987
- √ The Voting Rights of Homeless Citizens Act of 1997
- √ HUD Homeless Assistance Grants
- √ Temporary Assistance to Needy Families
- √ Transitional housing
- √ Medicaid

C. When your research is completed, design a brochure for your person (and others like them) explaining the services available to them.



Other topics for individual interest:

- √ Homeless people and their legal rights
- √ Homeless teenagers, males and females
- √ Undocumented immigrants and homelessness
- √ English as a Second Language and homelessness
- √ School attendance laws and homeless children
- √ The Great Depression and homelessness

Additional Activities

For Interpretation

THE NEW COLOSSUS

By Emma Lazarus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
 With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
 Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
 A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
 Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
 Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
 Glows world-wide welcome;
 Her mild eyes command
 The air-bridged harbor that twin cities
 frame.
 'Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!;
 Cries she with silent lips.
 'Give me your tired, your poor,
 Your huddled masses yearning to breathe
 free,
 The wretched refuse of your teeming
 shore.
 Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
 I lift my lamp beside the golden door!
 (Inscribed on the Statue of Liberty 1903)

For Discussion

Relate the poem, The New Colossus to our country today. Is it still meaningful? What is in it that especially speaks to you? Consider this poem in relation to the second poem. With our existing homeless problem, how well is our country living up to its ideal?

MEASURING HOMELESSNESS

from Homeless! Without Addresses
 in America by Cheryl Gorder

Numbers cannot count the pain of hunger,
 the dread of tomorrow,
 Numbers cannot see the sleepless nights,
 the aching bones.
 Charts don't show a child's tearful embrace,
 the parents' weariness.
 Statistics cannot feel the longing,
 the loneliness.
 If they could, the numbers would
 shoot off the pages.
 The charts would reach the
 skies and people's hearts
 would finally measure homelessness.

For Calculation

**What is the typical monthly cost of a 2-bedroom apartment?
 It depends on where you live!**

- √ Make a bar graph comparing the housing costs in different states. Which state is most expensive? Least expensive?
- √ The federal government defines "affordable housing as paying no more than 30% of your income on housing, including utilities.
 - \$665 is 30% of what number?
 - \$791 is 30% of what number?
 - \$834 is 30% of what number?
- √ If you earned minimum wage (\$5.15 per hour) and worked full time, how much money would you have left over after you paid rent, if you lived ...
 - in Illinois?
 - in California?
 - in New York?

Alabama (AL)	\$448
California (CA)	\$791
D.C.	\$863
Illinois (IL)	\$665
New York (NY)	\$834
Texas (TX)	\$580

*Source: Out of Reach: Rental Housing at What Cost?
 Nat'l Low Income Housing Coalition, 2000

Service Project Ideas

Here's what you can do today to help end homelessness

Advocacy

Letters, phone calls and personal visits are an effective means of influencing your elected officials; you CAN make a difference. Write to your city councilperson, state Representatives and Senators. Find their addresses in the government blue pages.

Here is a sample outline:

Dear (public official):

- √ State your name and city in which you live.
- √ Tell him/her you are disturbed there are homeless people and you want to know what he/she is doing about the problem.
- √ Explain:
 - that you have been learning about homelessness
 - how/why you find this to be an important issue
 - where you have performed service projects - a soup kitchen, shelter, etc.
- √ Insert a few facts for the person to consider. (Did you know that...?) Ask what s/he thinks about this and how s/he plans to react to this fact.
- √ Ask the person to please write to you and tell you what s/he will be doing to change the situation.

(*This letter from National Alliance to End Homelessness)

Direct and Indirect Service

1. Prepare and serve a meal at a soup kitchen.
 2. Collect blankets, hats and gloves for people who are living on the street and deliver these warm items to them.
 3. Organize a food, toiletries, clothing drive at your school and deliver to a shelter.
 4. Establish a relationship with a family shelter and then sponsor a “fun day” for the shelter’s children.
 5. Identify a family shelter and organize educational activities for the shelter’s children.
 6. Sponsor a field trip for homeless children from a family shelter.
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7. Meet with staff from a shelter, identify their most pressing needs, then design a service project that meets those needs.
 8. Volunteer to serve a meal at a shelter with classmates on a weekly/months basis.
 9. Conduct an oral history of residents at a shelter and provide it to the shelter as a history of their work.
 10. Join an affordable housing campaign or demonstration with community organizations around the city.
 11. Identify the most important public policy/ legislative issues that impact homeless people (i.e., minimum wage laws) and then develop an advocacy letter writing campaign.
 12. Participate in a walk-a-thon or other special event or fundraising activity of an organization serving homeless people in the city.

Resource List for High School for Service Learning

<p style="text-align: center;">Articles</p> <p>“America’s Third World,” <i>Newsweek</i>. August 8, 1988, pp 20-24.</p> <p>Egan, Jennifer. “To Be Young and Homeless.” <i>New York Times</i>. March 24, 2002.</p> <p>“No Place to Call Home,” <i>Scholastic News</i>, Vol. 67, No. 12, Dec. 14, 1998.</p> <p>Otto, Mary. “ ‘Homeless Redefined for Schools.’” <i>Washington Post</i>. July 22, 2002.</p> <p>Schmalz, Jeffrey. “Belying Popular Stereotypes, Many of Homeless Have Jobs.” <i>New York Times</i>. December 19, 1988.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Websites</p> <p>www.chicagohomeless.org Chicago Coalition for the Homeless www.endhomelessness.org National Alliance to End Homelessness www.nationalhomeless.org National Coalition for the Homeless www.nlchp.org National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty www.speakeasy.org/nasna North American Street Newspaper Assn. www.hud.gov US Dept. of Housing & Urban Development www.homeless.org Resources for the homeless www.streetwise.org Streetwise</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Books</p> <p>Baumhohl, Jim. <i>Homeless in America</i>. Oryx Press, 1996.</p> <p>Berck, Judith and Coles, Robert . <i>No Place to Be: Voice of Homeless Children</i>. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1992.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Kozol, Jonathan. <i>Rachel and Her Children: Homeless Families in America</i>. Fawcett Books, 1989.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Abrams, Henry N. National Alliance to End Homelessness, ed. <i>The Way Home: Ending Homelessness in America</i>. 1999.</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Organizations in Chicago:</p> <p>Chicago Coalition for the Homeless Julie Dworkin 1325 S. Wabash Ste 205 Chicago, IL 60605 312/435-4548</p> <p>Center for Economic Progress David Marsol 20 E. Jackson Chicago, IL 60604 312/341-1666</p> <p>Homeless on the Move for Equality Maurice O’Neal 28 E. Jackson Blvd, Ste 1300 Chicago, IL 60605 312/435-0225</p> <p>Jewish Council on Urban Affairs Gordon Mayes 618 S. Michigan Chicago, IL 60605 312/663-0960</p> <p>Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities Francisco Ramos 111 W Jackson Blvd 12th Floor Chicago IL 60604 312/341-5678</p> <p>The Night Ministry Melissa Maguire 4711 N. Ravenswood Chicago, IL 60640 773/784-9000</p> <p>R.E.S.T Bob Fiedler 941 W. Lawrence Chicago, IL 60640 773/784-0909</p> <p>Salvation Army Ireta Gasner 1548 W. Adams (Mail:1515 W. Monroe) Chicago, IL 60607 312/733-1371</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Teaching Guides</p> <p>Homeless Resource Guide K-12: www.wmpenn.edu/PennWeb/LTP/Reference/Teach/ResGuideK-12.html</p> <p>National Alliance to End Homelessness www.endhomelessness.org</p> <p>This guide prepared by Susan Marks, with information from Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, National Alliance to End Homelessness, Teacher Resource Guide - wmpenn.edu, and Jon Schmidt, CPS.</p>	

Classroom Connections

Issues of housing and homelessness can be incorporated into classroom curriculum. The following are just a few examples.

Social Sciences

- ✓ Examine homelessness during the Great Depression
- ✓ Study various laws that either increase homelessness or reduce the incidence of homelessness in the United States
- ✓ Research the levels of homelessness found in countries around the world and compare those rates with the United States
- ✓ Compile an analysis of the different strategies taken to solve the problem of homelessness

Economics

- ✓ Study the minimum wage laws, their development, and their impact on homelessness
- ✓ Examine housing costs in the city of Chicago, recent trends, and how rising costs impact homelessness
- ✓ Research the city of Chicago's strategy to provide affordable housing to its citizens
- ✓ Explore the levels of monthly income needed to sustain a family of four and then measure those against federal poverty guidelines

English

- ✓ Read literature that deals with the problem of homelessness as preparation for a service project
- ✓ Visit a homeless shelter, write field notes based on the experience, and discuss/analyze these notes in the classroom
- ✓ Visit a shelter and write an essay about the experience

Journalism

- ✓ Get copies of Streetwise, the weekly newspaper written and sold by homeless people, and examine the content and writing style
- ✓ Interview individuals who are homeless and develop articles for submission to Streetwise

Mathematics

- ✓ Conduct a statistical survey for an organization that serves homeless individuals

World Languages

- ✓ Conduct an educational activity at a shelter that provides support and services to individuals and families who speak another language
- ✓ Study the economic conditions of a country where the target language is spoken and analyze how those conditions positively or adversely impact homelessness

Links to Illinois State Standards

To assist you, here are some ways (there are many more) you can tie these projects and activities to our Illinois State Standards:

Social Sciences

- √ 14.A.4 Analyze how local, state and national governments serve the purposes for which they were created.
- √ 14.D.5 Interpret a variety of public policies and issues from the perspectives of different individuals and groups.
- √ 15.A.4a Explain how national economies vary in the extent that government and private markets help allocate goods, services, and resources.
- √ 15.A.4d Explain the effects of unemployment on the economy.
- √ 16.D.5 Analyze the relationship between an issue in United States social history and the related aspects of political, economic, and environmental history.
- √ 18.B.4 Analyze various forms of institutions (e.g., educational, charitable, governmental)

English

- √ 2.B.5b Apply knowledge gained from literature as a means of understanding contemporary and historical economic, social and political issues and perspectives.
- √ 4.B.5a Deliver planned and impromptu oral presentations, as individuals and members of a group, conveying results of research, projects or literature studies to a variety of audiences.
- √ 4.B.5b Use speaking skills to participate in and lead group discussions; analyze the effectiveness of the spoken interactions based upon the ability of the group to achieve its goal.
- √ 5.A.5b Research, design and present a project to an academic community audience on a topic selected from among contemporary issues.
- √ 5.C.5a Using contemporary technology, create a research presentation or prepare a documentary related to academic topics.

Mathematics

- √ 10.A.5 Construct a statistics-based presentation, individually and as members of a team to communicate and justify the results of a project.
- √ 10.B.5 Design a statistical experiment to answer a question about a realistic situation, conduct the experiment, use statistics to interpret the data, and communicate the results, individually and as members of a team.

Health

- √ 22.B.4 Explain social and economic effects of health problems on individuals and society.
- √ 24.B.5 Explain immediate and long-term impacts of health decisions to the individual, family and community.

Foreign Languages

- √ 28.B.4a Engage in extended conversations in a variety of situations.
- √ 29.E.5 Describe how migration, settlement, and colonization have affected the economy and environment of countries where the target language is spoken.