

2008 Contemporary Social Issues Seminar Series
Sponsored by the Universities at Shady Grove and the Rockville Institute

Homelessness Among Our Nation's Families

Tuesday, February 26, 2008

The Issue

What are the interventions and preventions to the tragedy of family homelessness?

What We Know

Families make up one-third of the homeless population. In a given year, this translates to about 420,000 families (about 2% of all U.S. families), including 924,000 children, spending at least one night in a shelter, on the streets, or in some other place not meant for human habitation.

Families with young children have become a fast-growing segment of the homeless population. This shift in demographics began in the early 1980s. Shelters, which were intended for single adults, became quickly populated with these families. Homelessness among families continues to be an all-too-common occurrence in our nation.

Over the last two decades, considerably more has been learned about the characteristics and background of the families who become homeless. The research has provided insights into:

- Risk factors associated with family homelessness,
- Housing and service needs of homeless mothers and their children, and
- Impact of homelessness on children.

Goals for the Presentation

This presentation will highlight research findings and the gaps in the knowledge, especially in understanding the subgroups of families with differing service needs.

Some research has uncovered successful interventions in meeting the housing and related needs of homeless families, as well as strategies for preventing homelessness among families.

This presentation will cover:

- The range of interventions that have been developed and examined,
- The effectiveness of these interventions in helping families improve their residential stability,
- What communities have tried to do to prevent homelessness, and
- If these communities have been successful.

The presentation will conclude with an overview of the current policy climate, including how the findings from past studies have influenced current activity to end homelessness among families within the decade.

Presenters

- **Debra J. Rog, PhD, Vice President, Rockville Institute.** Dr. Rog has been evaluating homeless programs for over 20 years and has conducted some of the seminal national work on homeless families. She conducted the first multisite study of services-enriched housing for homeless families beginning in 1990 for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. She has recently completed a multisite evaluation of interventions for homeless families headed by mothers coping with psychiatric and/or substance abuse conditions.

Dr. Rog has published widely on homelessness and evaluation research and has presented her findings on homeless families in a number of national venues. Dr. Rog has been elected the 2009 President of the American Evaluation Association. She will serve a 3-year term, starting as President-elect in 2008.

- **April Asare, student, University of Maryland.** Along with completing her coursework in social work, Ms. Asare is vice president of the Phi Alpha Honor Society (a national honor society for social work students), senior officer of the Social Work Student Association, and is a new member of the Universities at Shady Grove Black Business Association. Ms. Asare, a mother of three, is highly involved in a variety of community projects, including serving as Parent Teacher Association co-president, NAACP parent counsel, and a youth leader for Journey's Crossing Church.

After a series of unfortunate events, including divorce, poor health, and financial hardship, Ms. Asare experienced homelessness firsthand. Through assistance with social workers, she gained the inspiration and encouragement to return to college and pursue a career in social work.