



2016 Homelessness Awareness Week

A better understanding of homelessness in Michigan offers insight into how to end it

Last year across Michigan, more than 69,000 people were homeless – sleeping in cars, under bridges, in tents or encampments, in abandoned homes without heat or water, or in emergency shelters. In addition, there were more than 30,000 Michiganders who were at imminent risk of becoming homeless in a matter of weeks or days. Homeless Awareness Week, November 12-20, is a great time to learn more about homelessness and poverty in your community, and do something about it.

Here are some things we know about homelessness in our state:

- Half of the people receiving homeless services in Michigan were families with young children.
- There were over 1,200 unaccompanied youth, who primarily were living on the streets due to abuse, neglect, or family rejection due to LGBTQ identity.
- The senior population is one of the fastest growing sectors of the homeless population. This group saw a 28% increase from 2013-2015, and over two-thirds of the homeless senior population have at least one diagnosed disability.

Thanks to the work of the partners in Michigan's Campaign to End Homelessness at the local, state, and federal level, we have a better understanding of the causes and repercussions of homelessness. The root cause of homelessness is most often poverty, and is often coupled with domestic violence, unemployment, behavioral health issues, substance abuse, disabilities, and lack of affordable housing. Homeless individuals and families face a myriad of barriers to secure housing, not to mention that the experience of homelessness is significantly traumatic, especially for children.

In order to truly end homelessness in Michigan and the rest of the country we have to fight poverty with every tool at our disposal. We must increase access to core areas such as: affordable housing, economic opportunities, and health and human services. This will provide a platform for sustainable solutions for our Michigan residents who have no place to call home.

Our focus on these core areas has already reduced homelessness by 6 percent in 2015; 15 percent among veterans. Yet, thousands of people still remain without housing in Michigan. As the winter months draw near, please help us work to end homelessness in Michigan.

Homeless Awareness Week is a great opportunity to take action and help. Contact your local shelter, soup kitchen or local Continuum of Care and ask what you can do. Volunteer to serve meals, organize a fundraiser, or sponsor a resource drive in your community. If you are an employer, consider offering employment opportunities to help bring people back into the workforce. If you have rental property, consider renting to people with past evictions, criminal or credit histories. Learn more about this issue in your community and ways you can help. There are 100,000 Michiganders who will thank you for your efforts.

For more information about homelessness in Michigan: www.thecampaigntoendhomelessness.org.

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