

# Homelessness and Mental Illness



# Definition of Homelessness

- The federal definition of homelessness:
  - An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and
  - An individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is-

# Definition of Homelessness cont'd...

- A supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for persons with mental illnesses);
- An institution that provides temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or
- A public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as; a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

# Prevalence of Homelessness

- Nationally
  - More than 754,000 individuals are homeless on any given night in the U.S.
  - More than 2.1 million individuals are homeless over the course of a year (DHHS 2003).

# Prevalence of Homelessness

County	Homeless People in Families with Children					Homeless Single People				Total Homeless People
	Men	Women	Children	Total Persons	Total Households	Men	Women	Total Persons	Total Households	
<b>Pasquotank</b>	0	10	19	29	10	8	6	14	14	<b>43</b>

- This data is according to the 2011 Point in Time Study .
- There is no information for Currituck or Hertford counties.

# Types of Homelessness

- The majority of persons who experience homelessness are without a place to live for only a short period of time.
- A much smaller group of individuals are either:

# Types of Homelessness cont'd...

- Episodically Homeless (many episodes of homelessness, each lasting short periods of time).
- Chronically Homeless (few episodes of homelessness, each lasting longer periods of time).

# New Homeless People

- We also have a group of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness now due to the economy. These are people who are not what often comes to mind when you think of homeless individuals. These are individuals who have never experienced episodes of homeless before. These are people who have lost employment and are no longer able to make ends meet.

# Homelessness in Rural Communities

Homelessness is often assumed to be an urban phenomenon because homeless people are more numerous, more concentrated and more visible in urban areas.

However, many people experience homelessness in America's small towns and rural areas.

# Homelessness in Rural Communities cont'd...

## Causes...

- Poverty
- Lack of Affordable Permanent Housing
- Lack of economic opportunities
- More likely to live in a car, camper, or with relatives

# Understanding Rural Homelessness

- Less likely to live on the streets or in shelters
- Fewer shelters in rural areas
- More likely to live in a car, camper, or with relatives

# Homelessness and Mental Illness

- Numerous studies have shown that persons with mental illnesses are over represented among the homeless population. (McNeil et. al, 2005; Rosenberg et. al, 1999)
  - While 4% of the U.S. population has a serious mental illness,
    - *25% of the homeless population have a serious mental illness*

# Vulnerabilities

- Mental Illness can increase vulnerability for the homeless.
  - Mental illness can threaten housing stability due to conflicts with roommates, landlords, or neighbors.
  - Symptoms of mental illnesses are often active and untreated, making it difficult to meet basic needs for food, shelter, and safety and for fulfilling tasks such as paying rent and other bills.

# Homelessness and AOD Disorders

- Alcohol and other drug disorders are also over represented among the homeless.
  - 50-60% of the homeless have a diagnosable AOD disorder at some point in their lives (DHHS, 2003; Winarski, 1998).
- Approximately 25% of the homeless have a co-occurring mental illness and AOD disorder.

# What Works?

- System Level Values (DHHS, 2003)
  - Believe in recovery
  - Make “any door” the “right door” to services
  - Connect persons to mainstream resources
  - Provide flexible/low-demand services
  - Tailor services to individual needs
  - Involve formerly homeless persons
  - Offer long-term follow-up support

# What Works? Cont'd...

- Comprehensive and integrated service systems
- Incorporate outreach efforts, choice and ongoing support
- Provide supportive services once housed
- Utilize Assertive Community Treatment (ACT Teams)

# Remember.....

- Most of us are only a few paychecks away from being homeless.
- People who are homeless are not hopeless.
- Many with MH/SA diagnoses need services to assist them in getting control back of their lives and stopping a downward spiral.
- Many, who are new to homelessness, just need a helping hand.

# Housing Coordinator Functions

- Grant Seeking and Administration
- Create and maintain an inventory of housing resources
- Act as a resource for providers assisting consumers who are seeking safe and affordable housing
- Develop a positive working relationship with Public Housing Authorities and agencies that administer Section 8
- Provide or arrange education to service providers and community partners on a variety of housing topics such as NC Fair Housing Law and How to be a Good Landlord/Tenant
- Collaborate with community partners to identify and prioritize needs and to develop strategies to address those needs

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