

Homeless Voices for Justice

Causes of Homelessness

Structural Forces

Minimum wage below livable wage
Failed deinstitutionalization of mental health institutions
Hospital discharges to homelessness
Lack and destruction of affordable housing
High cost of health care
Lack of employment
Lack of safety-net and support services for people struggling with poverty, mental illnesses and addictions

Situational Causes

Job Layoff
Evictions and Foreclosures
Fires and Natural Disasters
Domestic Violence
Alcohol and substance use
Physical illness of self
Physical illness of family members or dependents
Mental illness
Family break-ups
Teens fleeing abuse and neglect

Indignities of Homelessness

- ⇒ Having to ask for help - this is difficult for many people. In fact, being homeless often means **having to ask for everything, all day long—and being expected to be polite and appreciative each time.**
- ⇒ People avoiding eye contact or staring, and the looks and comments you get from people.
- ⇒ Lack of access to bathrooms.
- ⇒ What to do when you're sick—no place to lie down during the day, lack of resources for medication and health care.
- ⇒ Having to carry all your belongings around and difficulty finding storage. **Having a backpack on all the time is a perceived indication of homelessness.**
- ⇒ Trying to get a job and having to give your shelter address or phone number to employers.
- ⇒ Trying to find an apartment—sometimes having to deal with landlords who have negative stereotypes of homelessness.
- ⇒ Feeling you have to panhandle (**although most homeless people do not**)—and the things people to say to those who do panhandle.
- ⇒ Excessive walking to avoid staying in one place.
- ⇒ **Lack of safety** - having no place to be out of the public (homeless people are too often the target of harassment and violence).