



**Ending Family Homelessness in Chicago
Call to Action on Findings from the Chicago Family Homelessness Research Project
June 15, 2018**

Recommendations for the City of Chicago and Continuum of Care (CoC)

- 1) Develop a cross-system strategy to assess all families experiencing homelessness, whether doubled-up or literally homeless, for housing needs. When families present for educational supports for homelessness, direct families to supports to end homelessness through the CoC and track participation of doubled-up families.
- 2) Expand the eligibility for homeless-dedicated housing resources to include those who fit into the U.S. Department of Education definition of homelessness, including families presenting as homeless to Chicago Department of Family & Support Services (DFSS)-administered early learning programs.
- 3) Increase the amount of flexible funding to address homelessness among families regardless of which definition of homelessness they meet. One request is to dedicate \$2 million in City resources for homelessness prevention and expand eligibility to meet the needs of those ineligible for state resources.
- 4) Set an initial enrollment target of at least 5% of total capacity for families experiencing homelessness in DFSS-administered early learning programs, with availability for households who are literally homeless or meet the U.S. Department of Education definition of homelessness. Enrollment targets, and plans for meeting them, should be reviewed and set annually based on available data and resources.

Recommendations for the State of Illinois

- 5) Support an increase of State Homelessness Prevention Funding by \$2 million from \$4.9 million to \$6.9 million.
- 6) Support an increase of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) to 50% of the federal poverty level. This would increase the grant for a family of 3 from \$520 to \$864 per month.
- 7) Establish a presumptive eligibility period of 90 days at the time of application to the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) for all families/children experiencing homelessness. Establish families/children experiencing homelessness as a priority population for the CCAP program, exempt families/children experiencing homelessness from the co-payment for the duration of their homelessness, and consider the creation of contracted slots for families/children experiencing homelessness.



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Perspective

The Chicago Family Homelessness Research Project and this Study provide unprecedented information on the experiences of families considered homeless through the traditional homeless services system and the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), which follows the U.S. Department of Education definition of homelessness. To date, the homeless services system and CPS have offered distinct resources and responses to thousands of students and families. Data indicate that nearly 750 CPS families each year, many of whom begin their pathway into literal homelessness as doubled-up in homes not their own, eventually touch the Continuum of Care (CoC) shelter system. Families are on the margins with extremely low-incomes and are disproportionately of color with little connection to workforce opportunities. Only 13% of unduplicated families access formal homeless services through the CoC or Homelessness Prevention networks. It is unclear if this is because they do not know how to seek services, have difficulty with access, or do not need them. The result is that many of homeless families with children in CPS are receiving minimal services only in the form of transportation assistance, fee waivers, and other modest educational supports.

This study reinforces the narrative of isolation and unequal access to income, employment and resources that perpetuate a cycle of poverty and homelessness for nearly 17,000 children. Families experiencing homelessness and are in transition or unstable environments are caught in an enigma of ineligibility – a job is needed to secure daycare benefits and daycare benefits are needed to secure a job. Also because families in homelessness can lose contact with service providers, scarce resources are nearly impossible for them to attain without the policy changes included in our recommendations.

A further purpose of these recommendations is to urge a call to action to public and private stakeholders to collaboratively address the needs of homeless families and cooperate on effective responses.

We know from national research, as well as local surveys by the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, that homeless students are more likely to miss school, be tardy, experience a change in behavior, receive school-based discipline, or become withdrawn. In addition, research shows childhood homelessness puts a child at greater risk for homelessness as an adult. It also has been proven that housing stability interventions are associated with increased literacy and family income, reduced moves, and better overall school performance. As such, we believe housing stability and improved educational outcomes are tied together.

Contact Information

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Recommendations endorsed by:

Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH)

CSH is a national leader in supportive housing, working in 48 states, including Illinois, to create stable, permanent homes for individuals and families. A nonprofit Community Development Financial Institution, CSH has committed over \$750 million in loans and grants to create supportive housing in every corner of the country. CSH advances solutions that use housing as a platform to improve lives, maximize public resources, build healthy communities, and break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

Chicago Coalition for the Homeless

Chicago Coalition for the Homeless is the only non-profit in Illinois dedicated to advocating for public policies that curb and can ultimately end homelessness. The organization leads strategic campaigns, community outreach, and public policy initiatives that target the lack of affordable housing in metropolitan Chicago and across Illinois.

Heartland Alliance

Heartland Alliance, one of the world's leading anti-poverty organizations, works in communities in the U.S. and abroad to serve those who are homeless, living in poverty, or seeking safety. It provides a comprehensive array of services in the areas of health, housing, jobs and justice – and leads state and national policy efforts, which target lasting change for individuals and society.

HomeWorks Campaign

Chicago Coalition for the Homeless launched the HomeWorks Campaign to address the need for stable housing and educational supports for homeless families. The campaign brings together parents, students, teachers, and homeless service providers to find permanent solutions to family homelessness. AIDS Foundation, Catholic Charities, CSH (Corporation for Supportive Housing), Facing Forward to End Homelessness, Family Rescue, Heartland Alliance, Inner Voice, Inspiration Corporation, New Moms, Inc., Primo Center for Women and Children, Renaissance Social Services, and Unity Parenting and Counseling.

The Ounce of Prevention Fund

The Ounce of Prevention Fund gives children in poverty the best chance for success in school and in life by advocating for and providing the highest-quality care and education from birth to age five.

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago

Catholic Charities fulfills the Church's role in the mission of charity to anyone in need by providing compassionate, competent and professional services that strengthen and support individuals, families and communities based on the value and dignity of human life. In order to remain faithful to our mission, Catholic Charities is guided by these core values: Respect, Compassion, Competence and Stewardship.

All Chicago Making Homelessness History

All Chicago's mission is to unite our community and resources to provide solutions that ensure and sustain the stability of home. All Chicago prevents and ends homelessness through: Emergency Financial Assistance; Community Partnerships; Data Collection and Analysis; and Training and Research: We provide our partners with trainings, tools, information and research to address homelessness more effectively.