

Homelessness should have a human face...



Sooner or later someone you encounter in your office, classroom, clinic or workplace will be at risk of homelessness.

In that moment, you can make the difference between a temporary crisis and a human tragedy.

You know their stories: management sweeps, relationship breakdowns, young people in conflict or fleeing abuse, addiction, illness, emotional distress ...

Today, the spiral from stability to distress can start in the space of a five-minute meeting.

Here are some facts that can help you. No one needs to feel helpless in the face of homelessness. Often, all it takes is knowing who to call.

As someone who works with people, your network already includes a wide range of resources that can help you prevent another family or individual from hitting the streets. And, your network can be expanded.

- TAKE the challenge.
- COMMIT to finding the people with the resources your residents, clients, patients, students or employees need to prevent their own homelessness.
- LEARN about the issue.
- TALK with your colleagues.
- SPREAD the word.
- GET INVOLVED TODAY!

Chances are that organizations in your community are helping people face the issue of homelessness with human solutions that really work.

Why not join them?
Short of time this year?

Your donation to Raising the Roof supports community-based programs with the goal of finding long-term solutions for Canada's homeless.

Take homelessness personally.
Your support makes a difference.



#200-263 Eglinton Ave. West
Toronto (ON) M4R 1B1
tel: 416.481.1838
fax: 416.481.1872
email: info@raisingtheroof.org
www.raisingtheroof.org
Charitable #139744569RR0001

Homelessness is an extreme learning obstacle for children and adults, and a severe challenge for classroom teachers and administrators. Just as no hungry student is ready to learn, no one can learn if s/he doesn't know where s/he will be sleeping tonight or is living in unsafe or unstable conditions. Inevitably, the extreme poverty of homeless and at-risk families prevents students from participating in school activities or social events. Poverty also makes it impossible for these students to purchase even basic school supplies. School attendance drops off – a loss of opportunity and potential that can impact an entire school.

Raising the Roof 's website (www.raisingtheroof.org) offers more than 40 examples illustrating how educators are responding to the crisis, working with adults and children who are at risk, to increase life skills and literacy levels and provide stability. You'll find details on the goals, funding and delivery agencies of these innovative practices, along with more sources of information, including a library of the best print and electronic information sources on educators who are breaking new ground in homelessness prevention.

understand the issue

know and watch for the warning signs

When it comes to homelessness, there is no single test to determine who is "at risk". Whether you work in a public school, community college, university or adult education program, your students may be reluctant to volunteer information about private issues such as job loss, health problems, poverty, family conflict, substance abuse, eviction, domestic violence and abuse. If you suspect any of these risk factors, ask discreetly about them.

Watch for these warning signs: no fixed address or phone number, lack of preparation for classes, poor school performance or attendance, a limited or absent support network of friends or family, visible health problems, past experiences with the criminal justice system, and insecure or low income. You can make a difference by referring students who write or talk about these risk factors to social service practitioners in your school, college or community. Once people are homeless, their learning potential plummets and the effort required to teach and to create a stable base for learning increases exponentially. Some groups are particularly vulnerable: youth with difficult family relationships, students who are new to the community with no secure housing, and those who have recently been in long-term health care facilities, half-way houses, foster care or served time.

You can help. Integrate discussions on homelessness into course material. You'll make it easier for at-risk students to self-identify and offer you an opening to start the prevention process. As an educator, your voice can have a powerful impact. Become an advocate for your students and for others at risk of homelessness in your community.

connect with or create the homelessness prevention team in your community

No one can prevent homelessness alone. Growing awareness of the cause-and-effect relationship between homelessness and education has created networks of service providers coming together to shape an effective community response – from housing, financial and service groups, to government and policy people, to city planners, to employment and education services, to landlords and private businesses.

If such a group does not exist in your community, consider taking the lead to form your own network. Talk to other teachers, your union and your professional association about boosting homelessness awareness. Your community's legal aid, community health, housing and social services agencies are valuable resources for knowledge of available services and housing. Take steps today so you'll know who to call when you need solutions for your students.

Organize to research, create and support homelessness prevention strategies. Ensure that strategies tried in your community and the lessons learned are shared widely to help everyone act together to prevent homelessness. Sometimes your collective work will lead to innovative community practices, like those available on the Raising the Roof website at www.raisingtheroof.org. (You'll find many ideas here for reference and inspiration.)

Educators know the human costs of rising homelessness firsthand. That's why more and more are speaking out. When you teach about homelessness and develop ways to identify, assist and support students who are at risk, you play a powerful role in protecting individual lives and in shaping more caring communities. Write, discuss the issue and make your voice heard. Tell your elected officials what you see and what you want done about it. Become an advocate for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness.

Support the development, funding and protection of affordable housing in your community. Your commitment lends credibility to the arguments for adequate income and social supports, and for policies and programs to increase the supply of affordable housing. Actively support health programs and initiatives in other sectors aimed at preventing the root causes of homelessness.

you know homelessness has a major impact on learning
make sure others know, too

