



Summary of recent publications by experts from the Center for Social Innovation (C4)  
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## Prevalence of Mental Illness in Homeless Children: Review of the Research



The number of children experiencing homelessness has reached historic heights in recent years. This systematic review examines the prevalence of mental health issues among homeless children and compares them to low-income housed children.

It is the first study to compare mental health issues experienced by homeless and low-income housed school-age children.

Overall, 10 to 26 percent of homeless pre-schoolers were found to have mental health problems requiring clinical evaluation. For homeless school-age children, the proportion of mental health problems requiring clinical evaluation was 24 to 40 percent, a rate 2 to 4 times higher than poor children aged 6-11 years. The evidence indicated that mental/behavioral problems in homeless pre-schoolers were not significantly different than low-income housed children. In contrast, school-age homeless children were significantly more likely to have mental health problems compared to low-income housed children.

The authors argue that evidence-based mental health interventions for children experiencing homelessness—including those targeted to school-age children—are essential and long overdue. The results highlighted the need to better understand the nature of mental health problems in homeless children and develop a research agenda that can be translated into practice and policy.



[The Prevalence of Mental Illness in Homeless Children: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis](#) by C4's [Ellen L. Bassuk](#) and Molly K. Richard as well as Alexander Tsertsvadze was published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* in February 2015.

## Rights, Responsibilities, and Homelessness



What rights do people experiencing homelessness have? What are society's responsibilities to care for people who are homeless? Who is deserving of help? Over the past 30 years, the answers to these questions have been in flux.

Local communities, including non-profit and religious organizations depending on donations, have taken on more and more of the responsibilities for caring for people who are homeless. At the same time, the legal rights of people who are homeless have eroded. Many cities have passed "anti-homeless" laws criminalizing activities necessary for survival on the streets. These laws favor the public's desire to not see people who are homeless over the rights of those who are homeless. Views about who deserves government support vary—some think the person who is homeless is responsible, others blame the person's pathologies, and still others place fault in structural, systemic explanations.

The authors examine how the "homeless threat," cultural views, legal understandings, and political priorities have impacted public policies. They also discuss how federal constitutional law and state homeless bills of rights could support legal rights for people experiencing homelessness and legal responsibilities to support and care for them.



[Rights, Responsibilities, and Homelessness](#) by C4's Collin J. Whelley as well as Kate W. McCabe was published in *Ending Homelessness: Why We Haven't, How We Can* by editors Donald W. Burnes and David L. DiLeo in April 2016.

## Racism and Discrimination Contribute to Homelessness Among LGBTQ Youth

Racial and ethnic identities develop in parallel and in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, but are not dependent on each other. Racism, homophobia, and transphobia contribute to homelessness among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth and make it difficult to exit homelessness. LGBTQ youth of color are at disproportionate risk of homelessness, discrimination, and violence—particularly transgender youth of color. LGBTQ youth of color sometimes also experience racism within the white mainstream gay community and face multiple barriers in accessing care and support from programs not designed to serve their specific needs.



In this section of a [report from The National LGBTQ Task Force and True Colors Fund](#), the authors call for a renewed commitment to dismantling racism, supporting LGBTQ people, and developing solutions at individual, family, community, and institutional levels. They also call for creating safe spaces for LGBTQ young people of color and facilitating open, destigmatized conversations about race, sexual orientation, and gender identity.



[Intersectionality and Race](#) by C4's [Jeffrey Olivet](#) and Marc Dones was published in [At the Intersections: A Collaborative Report on LGBTQ Youth Homelessness](#) by True Colors Fund and the National LGBTQ Task Force in May 2016.