

WELCOME TO TODAY'S WEBINAR

A Conversation on Homeless Youth and Trauma
Moderated by A. Kathryn Power, Region I Administrator SAMHSA



HOMELESS YOUTH AND TRAUMA

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Susan Erstling, LICSW, PhD

Senior Vice President, Trauma and Loss
Family Service of Rhode Island



Jennifer Barrera, BA
Program Director
Lucy's Hearth



Learning Objectives

- Understand the impact of homelessness and complex trauma on children, youth and families
- Learn recommendations for how shelter providers can help children and youth exposed to trauma
- Learn how to provide trauma-specific care to children, youth and families who experience homelessness

Child Homelessness In The U.S. Reaches Record High

Rise In Number of Homeless Children



Source: "America's Youngest Outcasts," published November 17, 2014 - National Center on Family Homelessness at the American Institutes for Research

Who Are The Homeless Children in America?

- ❑ A person in the U.S. is most likely to experience homelessness in the first year of life¹
- ❑ More than 150,000 children ages 1 to 5 stay in shelters each year
- ❑ Almost half of children in shelter are under age 6²

1. Gubits, D., et al. (July 2015). Family options study: Short-term impacts of housing and services interventions for homeless families. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research by Abt. Associates and Vanderbilt University.

2. The 2015 annual homeless assessment report to Congress: Part 2: Estimates of homelessness in the United States. [www.hudexchange.info /resource/5162/2015-ahar-part-2-estimates-of-homelessness/](http://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5162/2015-ahar-part-2-estimates-of-homelessness/)

Unaccompanied Youth

- ❑ Estimated nearly 2 million “homeless” or “street” youth nationwide
- ❑ 13 - 24 years of age
- ❑ Not in physical custody of a parent/guardian
- ❑ Lack safe/stable housing
- ❑ LGBTQ* youth disproportionately impacted



Source: *Complex Trauma: Facts For Service Providers Working With Homeless Youth And Young Adults* (2014). National Child Traumatic Stress Network.

Homeless Mothers

HOMELESS IN AMERICA



- ❑ Single mother in her late twenties with 2-3 young children, usually under age 6
- ❑ Women of color disproportionately impacted
- ❑ **MORE THAN 90%** have experienced physical and/or sexual assault³

Source: *Facts on Trauma and Homeless Children. National Child Traumatic Stress Network.*
www.NCTSN.net

How Trauma Effects Homeless Parents/Caregivers

- ❑ Easily overwhelmed, irritated
- ❑ Withdrawn
- ❑ Disorganized thoughts and/or difficulty remembering
- ❑ Trouble completing parenting tasks
- ❑ Difficulty separating their emotions and experiences from their children's
- ❑ Difficulty “reading” their children

Homelessness and Childhood Trauma

Results in:

- ❑ Loss of community, school, routines, possessions, privacy, familiar people, and security
- ❑ Increased vulnerability to additional trauma



Homelessness and Childhood Trauma (continued)

Compared to non-homeless children, homeless children:

- ❑ Are sick 2x more often
- ❑ Go hungry 2x more often
- ❑ Are 2x more likely to repeat a grade
- ❑ Have 3x the rate of emotional & behavioral problems
- ❑ Have 2x the rate of learning disabilities
- ❑ Have lower school attendance rates and are more often characterized as “chronically absent”



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

ABUSE



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

NEGLECT



Physical



Emotional

HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION



Mental Illness



Mother treated violently



Divorce



Incarcerated Relative



Substance Abuse

Child Homelessness and Impact of ACEs

- ❑ Social, emotional and cognitive impairments
- ❑ Behavioral issues
- ❑ Neurobiology is affected; may alter brain structure and function
- ❑ Impaired social relationships
- ❑ Attachment issues
- ❑ Longer term mental and physical health issues

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

ACEs can have lasting effects on....



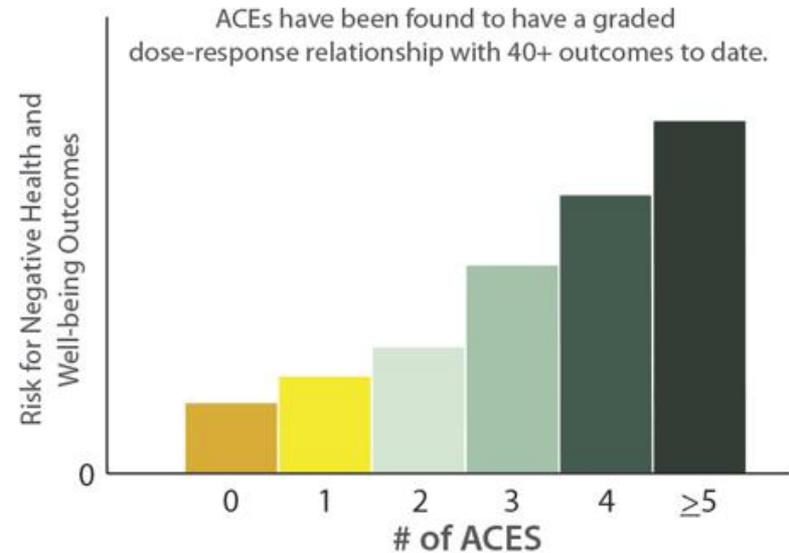
Health (obesity, diabetes, depression, suicide attempts, STDs, heart disease, cancer, stroke, COPD, broken bones)



Behaviors (smoking, alcoholism, drug use)



Life Potential (graduation rates, academic achievement, lost time from work)



*This pattern holds for the 40+ outcomes, but the exact risk values vary depending on the outcome.

What is Complex Trauma?



- ❑ Begins in early life
- ❑ Exposure to multiple traumatic events, profound abuse and/or neglect
- ❑ Occurs in the context of the child's relationship with a caregiver
- ❑ Invasive, interpersonal
- ❑ Long term impact
- ❑ Disrupts many aspects of development
- ❑ Interferes with the child's ability to form attachments

Homelessness and Complex Trauma

- ❑ Often exacerbates the consequences of past childhood trauma and/or re-traumatizes a child
- ❑ Fear about what will happen to them or their caregiver
- ❑ Repeated, unexpected, frightening thoughts
- ❑ Anxiety
- ❑ Sleep difficulties



Homelessness and Complex Trauma (continued)

- ❑ Loss of appetite
- ❑ Difficulty concentrating
- ❑ Poor impulse control
- ❑ Regression (bed wetting, thumb sucking)
- ❑ Difficulty forming relationships or trusting the support of caring adults

Also For Youth:

- ❑ Substance use
- ❑ Stealing, swearing, physical aggression
- ❑ Risky sexual behaviors and/or intimate partner violence

Complex Trauma May Effect Participation in Services

- ❑ Repeated traumatic events can impair the ability of homeless parents and children to take advantage of available services
- ❑ Families may require assistance with
 - developing strategies for keeping their children safe and connected with school
 - navigating healthcare, transportation, and housing systems
 - getting connected to appropriate mental health services

What Do Providers Need To Know?



- ❑ Impact of change in geographic location on the family
- ❑ Adjusting to shelter living (rules and requirements, group living, mothers may know one another)
- ❑ Parenting expectations (discipline, routines, supervision)
- ❑ Cultural norms and perspectives vary

What Do Providers Need To Know?

(continued)

- ❑ Often need to provide acute, crisis focused assistance in a short amount of time
- ❑ Once physically safe, families need the support of a caring staff member whom they can trust
- ❑ High shelter staff turnover and rotating staff shifts may contribute to inconsistency
- ❑ Shelter workers may “get caught up in” or “take on” families stress
- ❑ Need to address secondary traumatic stress of staff

Trauma-informed Shelter Service Provision

- ❑ Enhance safety, security and stability
- ❑ Take time to build trust
- ❑ Listen openly, without judging
- ❑ Advocate for each family
- ❑ Provide strategies to help parents maintain children's daily activities and consistent routines
- ❑ Evidence-based and best practices
- ❑ Cultural and linguistic sensitivity, including LGBTQ*
- ❑ Staff with “lived” experience



Trauma-informed Shelter Service Provision (continued)



- ❑ Use standardized assessments/screens
- ❑ Arrange for safe, developmentally appropriate, and fun family activities
- ❑ Promote partnerships between shelters and community agencies – work toward integrating systems
- ❑ End shelter policies that have unintended negative consequences for children
- ❑ Resident input/Councils & Residents on Board of Directors



“Olivia and Tara found themselves with no where to turn and homeless. Lucy's Hearth in Middletown provided temporary housing and a chance for a new beginning...”

www.facebook.com/Margie-OBrien-RI-Capitol-TV-197010730642503/?hc_ref=SEARCH&fref=nf

Resources

- ❑ Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Center
www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/programs/runaway-homeless-youth/programs/rhyttac
- ❑ Harm Reduction, Positive Youth Development, And Trauma Informed Care: What Are They And How Do They Operationalize In Youth Serving Programs
www.manynet.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/harm-reduction-pyd-and-tic-for-cop.pdf
- ❑ A Guide for Youth: Understanding Trauma youthmovenational.org
- ❑ Harm Reduction Coalition
samhsa.gov/homelessness-programs-resources/hpr-resources/hrc-advocates-behavioral-health
- ❑ Engaging Women in Trauma-Informed Peer Support: A Guidebook
www.samhsa.gov/nctic/resources
- ❑ NCTSN - Complex Trauma: Facts for Shelter Staff Working with Homeless Children and Families
www.nctsn.org/products/complex-trauma-facts-shelter-staff-working-homeless-children-and-families

Thank You!!!



Questions??