

# NATIONAL LAW CENTER ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

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## Indicators of Increasing Homelessness Due to the Foreclosure and Economic Crises

The foreclosure and economic crises are significantly increasing homelessness and the number of families at risk of homelessness in cities and counties across the country. Philip Mangano, the Executive Director of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, has said that he is hearing of preliminary data from cities and organizations showing homelessness increases of as much as 20 percent.<sup>1</sup> Reuters has reported that local and state homeless groups have seen a 61 percent rise in homelessness since the foreclosure crisis began in 2007.<sup>2</sup>

The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty is tracking news stories and reports from around the U.S. on its new Wiki site, <http://wiki.nlchp.org/display/Forum/Foreclosure+News>. The following statistics, taken from these stories and reports, are indicators of increasing homelessness in the U.S.: (1) increasing foreclosures and evictions, (2) increasing numbers of homeless students, (3) increasing use of shelter, and (4) increasing use of food stamps, food pantries, and soup kitchens.

### **Increasing Foreclosures and Evictions**

- The sheriff's department in Rensselaer County, New York reported that foreclosure evictions "made up about 35 percent of the evictions carried out by deputies in 2008, up from about 30 percent in 2007."<sup>3</sup>
- A survey of Maricopa, Arizona "counted 2,918 homeless people throughout the county, [which represents] a 20 percent increase from the 2,426 counted in 2008." In addition, the Homeless Street Count found 230 families living on the streets, up 370 percent from last year's count of 49 families. The number of homeless youths "rose to 139, more than triple [2008's] count."<sup>4</sup>
- A recent "point in time" survey in New Jersey showed that "2,004 adults said they were forced to vacate their rental properties and are now homeless, compared with 1,182 who claimed the same status last year, a 70 percent jump."<sup>5</sup>
- The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimated that "the number of people in "deep poverty" – with incomes below half of the poverty line – will rise by an estimated 4.5 – 6.3 million if unemployment reaches 9 percent."<sup>6</sup>
- Boston's Homeless Census found an "overall total of 7,681 homeless people [one night] – which included individuals and family members – up from 6,930 last year, an 11 percent jump." The number of homeless children in Boston "soared 24 percent in 2008, from 1,850 to 2,288."<sup>7</sup>
- The Colorado Coalition for the Homeless reported that it has seen a "20% rise in homeless families seeking assistance due to foreclosure on their property or their rental property, evictions due to job loss, medical problems, legal fees and the rise in the cost of living."<sup>8</sup>

- The U.S. Conference of Mayors’ reported that 12 cities experienced “an increase in homelessness because of the foreclosure crisis.”<sup>9</sup>
- The National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) reported in December 2008 that “more than 20% of the properties facing foreclosure nationwide are rentals” and “because rental properties often are home to multiple families,” renters make up nearly half of the families facing eviction.<sup>10</sup>
- On March 27, 2008, CBS News reported that 38 percent of foreclosures involved rental properties, affecting at least 168,000 households.<sup>11</sup>
- The Sarasota, Florida, *Herald Tribune* has said that, by some estimates, more than 311,000 tenants nationwide have been evicted from homes this year after lenders took over the properties.<sup>12</sup>
- The *Boston Herald* has reported that eviction filings in Massachusetts rose by 15% in the past quarter alone.<sup>13</sup>
- Contra Costa County, California, Supervisor Federal Glover has said that, "We're finding our homeless population [in Contra Costa County] is changing because of what is happening in foreclosures...."<sup>14</sup>

### **Increasing Number of Homeless Students**

- The Utah State Office of Education found that “one in every 50 students in Utah is homeless.” The Nebo School District, in particular, has seen an increase of nearly 700 homeless students since 2008.<sup>15</sup>
- A report released by the National Center on Family Homelessness in early March 2009 found “more than 1.5 million children are homeless annually in the United States -- one in every 50 American children.”<sup>16</sup>
- The Francis Howell School District in St. Charles County, Missouri “has four times as many homeless students than two years ago.” The Parkway and Rockwood schools in St. Louis County, Missouri, also reported an increase in homeless students: “so far [for 2009, the district places the homeless population] at 135 and 190 students, respectively, up from 112 and 137” during the 2007-2008 school year.”<sup>17</sup>
- Chicago Public Schools have experienced a “28 percent increase [in the homeless student population] between November 2007 and November 2008.” According to the Illinois State Board of Education, “the number of homeless students rose from 2,628 to 4,399 in eight suburban counties between fiscal year 2006 and 2008.”<sup>18</sup>
- Broward County Public Schools have “already helped more than 1,300 homeless children this year and expect the end-of-year total to be higher than last year.” The County’s homeless student population is “about six times what it was six years ago.”<sup>19</sup>
- The number of homeless students in Oakland “has doubled to 1,200 since [2007].” Similarly, Clark County, Nevada, which has “one of the worst foreclosure rates in the nation,” reported “4,033 homeless students, double the number [from 2007].”<sup>20</sup>

- Jefferson County Schools in Colorado have seen “over a 100% increase in families in crises served through the district’s homeless education program, from 126 families in 2007 to 260 in 2008. Across the first three months of [the 2008-2009] school year, the district has served 527 families in crises compared to 367 last year.”<sup>21</sup>
- The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth found that 459 of 1,716 school districts nationwide have had “an increase of at least 25 percent in the number of homeless students identified between the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years.”<sup>22</sup>
- In Fairfax County, Virginia, there are around 1,200 homeless students in the public school system, a 25% increase from last year’s 900, which is attributed to foreclosures.<sup>23</sup>
- The Iowa City school district is reporting a sharp increase in the number of homeless students living in the district. There were 354 homeless students in the 2007-2008 school year, up from 279 in 2006-2007, and from 234 the year before that.<sup>24</sup>
- The Cincinnati school system reports it has almost 1,200 homeless students, a 28% increase from last year; most are from families evicted from foreclosed properties.<sup>25</sup>
- A record number of Utah students have been displaced by the economic downturn. Social service liaisons at many Utah public school districts say they have already noticed an increase in the number of displaced students over the same time last year. Some school districts have almost as many displaced students this school year as all of last school year.<sup>26</sup>
- There are twice as many homeless students this year as last year in Grand Junction, Colorado according to the coordinator of the Grand Junction District's homeless children program.<sup>27</sup>
- The number of homeless students in the Springfield Public Schools district rose by more than 25 percent just over the last month. Meaning this year, Springfield schools could be dealing with the highest number of homeless students it’s ever seen.<sup>28</sup>

### **Increasing Shelter Use**

- Montgomery County, Ohio has had “nearly 3,000 people [access] the homeless shelter system . . . [in 2008] for the first time.”<sup>29</sup>
- The New York City Department of Homeless Service reported that the “number of families entering New York City homeless shelters jumped by 40 percent” in July – November 2008, compared to the same period in 2007.<sup>30</sup>
- The Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance reported “a 32 percent increase between November 2007 and November 2008 in the number of homeless families residing in state-supported emergency shelters.”<sup>31</sup>
- Data from the Connecticut Department of Social Services Homeless Shelter Reports reveal that “family homeless shelters turned away 30 percent more families due to lack of bed space in September 2008 than in September 2007.”<sup>32</sup>

- The Minnesota Housing Finance Agency reported a “20 percent increase between the first 10 months of 2008 and the comparable period in 2007 in the number of homeless families in emergency shelters.”<sup>33</sup>
- Data from CalWORKS Program Division revealed a “12 percent increase between September 2007 and September 2008 in the number of families receiving welfare assistance who are known to be homeless.”<sup>34</sup>
- The demand on shelter services in December 2008 in San Francisco was “50 percent more than [it was in 2007].” San Francisco’s Human Services Agency found 62% “of those on the [shelter services] waiting list [were] new to the system.”<sup>35</sup>
- In St. Paul, Minnesota, Dorothy Day Center sheltered 458 families in the first nine months of the year (almost as many as in all of 2006), with a record 88 families in September alone.<sup>36</sup>
- Massachusetts reports that number of families living in shelters has risen by 33% in the past year.<sup>37</sup>
- Since November 2007, the number of homeless families living in motels and hotels in Massachusetts has soared from 69 to 638.<sup>38</sup>
- In New York City, 2,747 families applied for shelter in September 2008, up from 2,087 in September 2007.<sup>39</sup>
- In Hennepin County, including Minneapolis, 880 families were in shelters from January through August 2008, up from 698 in that period last year. At least 10% this year came from foreclosed properties where most had been renters, says Cathy ten Broeke, county coordinator to end homelessness.<sup>40</sup>
- In Denver, nearly 30% of the homeless are newly homeless. Services provided by the Denver Rescue Mission have gone up about 10% as the faces of the homeless population in Denver change.<sup>41</sup>
- A shelter in South San Francisco has seen a 300 percent increase in requests for emergency rental assistance from people who have been laid off or have had trouble getting enough work hours to pay the rent.<sup>42</sup>
- In Concord, New Hampshire, applications for assistance from the human services department have jumped by 15 percent over the last year, with about 90 percent of the department’s assistance going to rent.<sup>43</sup>
- In Los Angeles, at least one shelter reports that half its clients are formerly middle-class people.<sup>44</sup>
- According to the *St. Petersburg Times*, Tampa Bay's fastest-growing homeless population is parents and children. Area shelter directors, homeless advocates, government officials and child welfare agencies say the rising unemployment rate, the sluggish housing market and the spiraling economy have forced an unprecedented number of families out of their homes.<sup>45</sup>

- In Panama City, Florida, 40% of the rescue mission's clients are homeless for the first time, due to foreclosure, job loss or both.<sup>46</sup>
- In some communities, including Reno, Portland and Seattle, tent cities are going up as shelters overflow.<sup>47</sup>

### **Increasing Food Stamp and Pantry Use**

- The Denver Rescue Mission “served an additional 5,000 meals this October compared with October 2007 and provided 1,000 additional shelter nights. Similarly, Jefferson County has seen a “100 percent increase in the number of families seeking emergency food and shelter.”<sup>48</sup>
- Skid Row's Union Mission in Los Angeles “admitted a half-dozen two-parent families, many of who have lost their homes to foreclosure” in December 2008 alone.<sup>49</sup>
- The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities recently reported that food stamp caseloads have increased dramatically in recent months, rising by 2.6 million people or 9.6 percent between August 2007 and August 2008.<sup>50</sup>
- In Concord, New Hampshire, the food pantry at First Congregational Church serves about 4,000 meals to over 800 people each month, around double the rate from last year.<sup>51</sup>
- The San Mateo County Department of Health and Human Services says the number of people receiving federal food stamps jumped by 21 percent between this September and last.<sup>52</sup>
- Second Harvest Food Bank, which supplies several food pantries in San Mateo County, saw a 55 percent increase this fall in the number of direct food requests on its emergency hotline over last year.<sup>53</sup>

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- <sup>6</sup> Barbara Sard, *Number of Homeless Families Climbing Due to Recession*, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Jan. 8, 2009, available at <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=2228>
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- <sup>9</sup> The United States Conference of Mayors, *Hunger and Homelessness Survey*, Dec. 2008, available at [http://www.usmayors.org/pressreleases/documents/hungerhomelessnessreport\\_121208.pdf](http://www.usmayors.org/pressreleases/documents/hungerhomelessnessreport_121208.pdf)
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- <sup>11</sup> NATIONAL COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS, *NCH Public Policy Recommendations: Foreclosure and Homelessness Prevention*, available at [www.nationalhomeless.org/publications/facts/2008Policy/Foreclosure.pdf](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/publications/facts/2008Policy/Foreclosure.pdf).
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- <sup>31</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>32</sup> *Id.*
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<sup>40</sup> *Id.*

<sup>41</sup> Nelson Garcia, *Economy goes down, service to homeless goes up*, KUSA-TV CHANNEL 9 NEWS, Nov. 15, 2008, available at <http://www.9news.com/news/article.aspx?storyid=103973>.

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<sup>48</sup> Mike McPhee, *Homeless in Denver*, The Denver Post, Dec. 18, 2008, available at [http://www.endlongtermhomelessness.org/press\\_center/homeless\\_in\\_denver.aspx](http://www.endlongtermhomelessness.org/press_center/homeless_in_denver.aspx).

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<sup>53</sup> *Id.*