Coalition on Homelessness, San Francisco
Fact Sheet on Homelessness

Homelessness is not a lifestyle choice—it is the result of extreme poverty.

• Since 1976, the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) department's total budget has dropped by more than $45 billion per year, with the biggest drop occurring between 1980 and 1983 (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2001).

• The average rent in San Francisco is over $3,000, far exceeding a service sector employee's paycheck ($10/hour gross or $1,495/month net) and more than three times a monthly public assistance check ($723 for family of three).

• People who cannot afford market rents turn to subsidized housing for help. In San Francisco, there are 40,000 people on the combined waitlist for public housing and Section 8. The waitlist for Section 8 was last open for one month in 2001. The waitlist for public housing closed February 1, 2010.

How many people are homeless and who are they?

• The January 2013 the San Francisco homeless count found 6,436 homeless people. This is considered an undercount, as families and youth are underrepresented. (2013 San Francisco Homeless Count and Survey)

• 48% of survey respondents were experiencing homelessness for the first time. The overwhelming majority became homeless as San Franciscans (61%). (2013 San Francisco Homeless Count and Survey).

• More then two-thirds (63%) of all survey respondents said they had a disabling condition in 2013. (2013 San Francisco Homeless Count and Survey).

• In San Francisco, about 40% of the homeless population is members of homeless families (First Five). There are currently 2,200 homeless student enrolled in San Francisco Unified School District, this is up from 1,600 in 2009 and 1,232 in 2005. This only includes those school age children who identify themselves as homeless to the district. In addition, more then 1,600 homeless family members are living in Single Room Occupancy Hotels. This includes more then 800 children living in cramped, substandard housing

• At one San Francisco youth program, they have contact with over 3,400 homeless youth in San Francisco a year. (Larkin Street Annual Report 2010)

How has the Recession Impacted Homelessness in San Francisco

• Families have been hit the most noticeably by the recession in San Francisco. The number of families waiting for shelter has more then tripled since the summer of 2007. Currently, there are over 200 families waiting for shelter in San Francisco and the wait exceeds six months.

• Homeless Resource Centers have also reported an increase in newly homeless single adults seeking shelter, with as much as a 50% increase in new clients in at least two homeless drop-in centers post recession.

How does mental illness and/or addiction factor in?

This fact sheet brought to you by the Coalition on Homelessness, San Francisco
The Coalition on Homelessness is committed to ending homelessness through organizing homeless people while protecting the human rights of those forced to remain on the streets.
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• Individuals suffering from mental illness and addiction disorders are the most visible portion of the population. However, 28% of the homeless people in San Francisco have a serious mental illness. 31% have a substance abuse problem. (2011 San Francisco Homeless Count and Survey).
• Many individuals with mental illnesses self-medicate with drugs and alcohol while experiencing the trauma of being without a home; this leads to addiction disorders.
• In San Francisco, there are approximately 500 people on the waitlist for methadone and residential treatment (Community Substance Abuse Services, SF Department of Public Health, January 2009).

Human rights and homelessness
• According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has a right to an adequate standard of living, including housing. While the United States touts human rights to other countries, in the United States, 3.5 million people experience the trauma of homelessness each year.
• In the past dozen years in San Francisco, 167,074 citations were given out for sleeping and sitting in public (San Francisco Municipal Court). Each citation carries a fine of more than $76. An unpaid or unresolved ticket goes to warrant in 21 days, and the fine doubles. Accumulated warrants can result in incarceration and denial of affordable housing.

What about San Francisco’s shelter system?
• There are approximately 1,300 beds in shelters for adults and families – or less than 1 bed for every five homeless people.
• To receive a shelter bed, single adults must have their face and finger tips bio-metric imaged, using a system that cost more than $1 million and frequently breaks down.
• While the city reports vacancies in the shelters each night, 2 out of 3 people seeking shelter are turned away. (Shelter Monitoring Committee, HSA Vacancy Reports, 2009).

How is the Coalition on Homelessness Responding?
The Coalition has been busy organizing homeless people to fight for justice for over twenty-five years. During that time, we have forced the city to respond to this crisis by creating housing, opening new substance abuse treatment programs, transforming the mental health system and creating jobs for homeless people. We have passed numerous pieces of legislation that ensures the human rights of homeless people are protected, and we have successfully beat back policies that would harm the population. We have established ourselves as a strong force to be reckoned with – a group who does not compromise homeless people’s lives, and never gives up fighting for our rights. Check out our website or call us for ways to join the struggle.

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