



Photo by Chuck Cherny, Chicago Tribune

## How Many People Are Homeless in Chicago?

### *A Fiscal Year 2006 Analysis*

Over the past three decades, homelessness has persisted as a serious problem in the city of Chicago. However, throughout that time, a comprehensive, reliable figure for the number of people who do not have a home has not been determined. This is a significant gap not only in our public records but also in our public policy. By not adequately accounting for the city's homeless population, we are unable to understand the true scope of the problem. Thus, we are ill equipped to come up with realistic strategies and adequate resources to address homelessness.

*Counting those not served in shelters or on the street may be difficult, but doing so is imperative.*

Estimating the number of homeless people is a distinct challenge, as they are a transient and often invisible population. The City of Chicago conducts a partial census of the city's single-night homeless population. That count includes those who are officially reported as being served in the city's homeless shelters that night and any homeless people that can be counted on the streets or other locations

outside of shelters that night. This method has limitations because locating every homeless person outside is very difficult, particularly on a cold winter night. Also, this count does not include people living temporarily with others because they cannot afford housing—a situation often referred to as “doubled-up.”

Counting those not served in shelters or on the street may be difficult, but doing so is imperative. To meet this challenge, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, in collaboration with the University of Illinois at Chicago Survey Research Laboratory, developed a methodology designed to count both those served in shelters and those who never access shelters. The Chicago Coalition for the Homeless compiled and analyzed the data and the Survey Research Laboratory helped shape the methodology and reviewed the findings of the analysis. Every effort was made to make this a conservative effort and to avoid duplication.

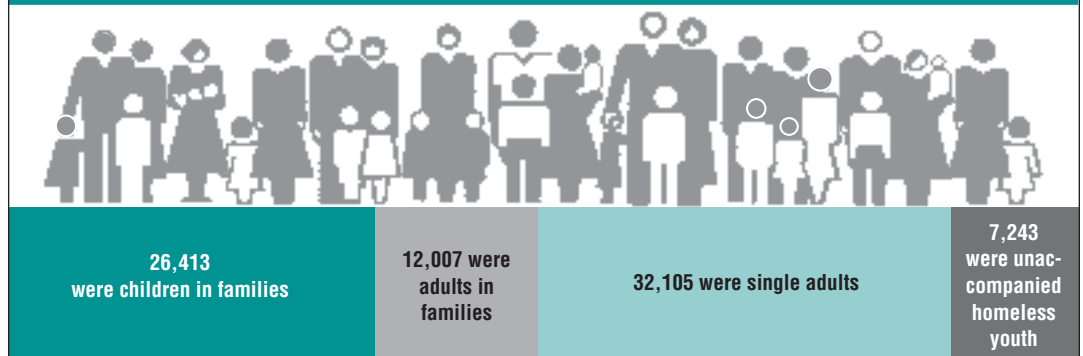
#### KEY FINDINGS

##### Chicago's Estimated Homeless Population in the Course of a Year

- Between 7/1/05 and 6/30/06, 73,656 people were homeless in Chicago.
- Of those, 26,413 were children in families, 12,007 were adults in families, 32,105 were single adults, and 7,243 were unaccompanied homeless youth. *Note: Some overlap occurs between the unaccompanied homeless youth and the other numbers because the definition of homeless youth includes minors (counted under children), youth ages 18-21 (counted as single adults), and pregnant and parenting youth (counted as adults in families). This is the reason that the sum of the numbers above is larger than the total.*
- Of the 73,656 homeless people, 19,477 were served in shelters, and 54,179 were living on the streets, doubled-up, in cars, in abandoned buildings, or in some other location that was not a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.
- Of the 38,420 members of families (adults plus children), 9,048 were served in shelters, and 29,372 were living doubled-up.
- Of the single adults, 9,150 were served in shelters, and 22,955 were not served by shelters. *Note: Because a different methodology was used to estimate single adults not served in shelters, we do not know whether those single adults were doubled-up, on the street or in some other situation.*
- Of the homeless youth, 1,279 were served in shelters, and 5,964 were not served in shelters.

*(continued on reverse)*

#### 73,656 PEOPLE WERE HOMELESS IN CHICAGO BETWEEN 7/1/05 AND 6/30/06



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(continued from reverse)

### Chicago's Estimated Homeless Population on an Average Night

- On a typical night in Chicago, 21,078 people were homeless.
- Of that total, 4,654 were served in shelters, and 16,424 did not access shelters.
- Of the total homeless, 9,871 were children, 3,824 were adults in families, 6,803 were single adults, and 1,348 were unaccompanied homeless youth. *Note: There is some overlap with the homeless youth and the other numbers, as described above.*
- Of the 13,695 members of families (adults plus children), 2,595 were served in shelters, and 11,100 were doubled up.
- Of the single adults, 1,939 were served in shelters, and 4,864 were not served in shelters.
- Of the homeless youth, 464 were receiving services (includes shelter and nonresidential services), and 884 were not receiving services.

### DEFINITIONS AND SOURCES

#### Definition of "Homeless" Used by Report

A clear understanding about how homelessness is defined in this estimate is important. Currently, "homeless" has two federal definitions, one used by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and one used by the Department of Education (DOE), both printed below. The primary difference between the two is that only the DOE

definition includes people who are temporarily sharing the housing of others because of economic hardship.

Chicago Coalition for the Homeless and the University of Illinois at Chicago Survey Research Laboratory believe that the definition used by the Department of Education more accurately describes all situations in which homeless people find themselves. The study therefore used that definition for the estimate.

In particular, this estimate attempts to count for the first time those living doubled-up. People who have lost their housing and are living with friends or relatives often change temporary locations on a daily or weekly basis. Shelters may be unavailable or, if available, may not be able to house all members of the family, as older boys and fathers are often excluded from family shelters. People in doubled-up situations are dependent on those families or individuals who take them into their homes; they can be forced to leave at any time. Thus they are no more or less in need of permanent affordable housing than are those living in shelters. Host families essentially serve as temporary shelters.

#### Sources of Data

Applying the U.S. Department of Education's definition, data were analyzed from four sources:

- 1) *FY 2006 Chicago Department of Human Services, Homeless Services and Prevention Programs Annual Report, 7/1/05-6/30/06.*
- 2) Chicago Public Schools Homeless Education Program. Data were collected on homeless children identified in the Chicago Public Schools during the 05-06 school year, 9/1/05-6/30/06. Because the Chicago Public Schools track homeless children who are living doubled-up as well as those in shelters, these data provide great insight into the number of those who don't access shelter.
- 3) A 2003 statewide telephone survey, conducted by the University of Illinois Survey Research Laboratory, which asked several questions about prior homeless experiences.
- 4) *Unaccompanied Homeless Youth in Illinois: 2005*, by Timothy P. Johnson and Ingrid Graf, Survey Research Laboratory, University of Illinois at Chicago.

#### Federal Definitions of Homeless

The definition used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is as follows:

- (1) an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and
- (2) an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is—
  - (A) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);
  - (B) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or
  - (C) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

The definition used by the U.S. Department of Education to define homeless children and youth is as follows:

- (A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and
- (B) includes—
  - (i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
  - (ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section 103(a)(2)(C));
  - (iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
  - (iv) migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).