

# HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS TOOLKIT FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH

EVERYBODY COUNTS CHARLOTTE | 2018 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT

This toolkit is designed to help you find ways to talk about the housing and homelessness issues in Charlotte-Mecklenburg with children and youth. Children and youth have probably seen someone that has experienced homelessness before. They might have even asked questions about what they see out of genuine curiosity. Realizing that a person might not have a home can also be unsettling.

It is important to talk honestly with your children and youth about the issues facing people experiencing homelessness while also showing compassion. Together, knowledge and compassion will help them throughout their lives as they wrestle with complicated social issues like housing and homelessness.

Here are some quick facts and reflection questions to think about together. At the end is a way for children and youth to take action to help with the 2018 Point-in-Time Count.

## 1) Definition of homelessness

Homelessness means that a person does not have a home. This means that they don't have a place of their own to sleep, eat or shower.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Can you think about a time you saw someone that might have been homeless? What did they look like? How did you know they were homeless? What did you think when you saw them?
- Do you know anyone that has lost their home before? Imagine how it might have felt to lose their home? How would you feel? What would you do?

## 2) Why people are homeless

Most people are homeless because they cannot find a home they can afford. Adults must pay for their home as well as other things they need like their food, a car, and going to the doctor if someone gets sick. Sometimes adults cannot pay for everything and might have to make a choice to pay for one thing like their car to get to work.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Can you name all the things your family needs? Make a list together and write down the cost. Did anything surprise you? How much does all the things you need cost?
- Imagine you could not pay for everything on the list and you had to choose 2 things to take off – what would you choose and why? What happens if you take those 2 things off? Do you have to change anything else?

### **3) Why people cannot afford their home**

Some adults don't have enough money to afford their home because they do not have a job. It can be very hard to get a job especially if you do not have a way to get there, friends to help you get ready, or a shower to look nice for your interview.

There are also lots of adults who have a job and still cannot afford their home. This is because living in a house or apartment costs a lot of money – sometimes, a lot more money than they can make at their job. There are many people where we live that who work in jobs that do not pay enough for their housing. This can include firefighters, teachers, security guards and people who work at restaurants.

#### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

- Did you know that you can work and not make enough to pay for housing?
- Why do you think some jobs pay more money than others?
- Why do you think it might be hard for a person who is homeless to find a job?

### **4) Kids can be homeless, too**

Some kids become homeless when their family loses their home and they must go to a shelter or hotel to stay. Sometimes, children and youth might be homeless by themselves. There are special shelters for children and youth who are homeless by themselves. Learn more about them here: [The Relatives & Time Out Youth](#).

#### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

- Do you know any other children or youth who have been homeless?
- Imagine your best friend loses their house and they must move to a shelter. What do you think your friend might be feeling? What might they need at school to help them while they are homeless?
- Did you know that there are children and youth who are homeless in your school right now but they look just like you? Would you treat a child or youth differently if you knew they were homeless? Would you want to be treated differently?

### **5) School can be hard for a child or youth that is homeless**

For children and youth who are homeless, school can be especially hard. Imagine having to do all the normal things you must do at school and then also worrying about where you will eat and sleep at night when you leave school. This means that children and youth who are homeless can have a tough time trying to focus in class and complete their work even if they are the best student in the class. They might also be late to school, miss classes or get in trouble more often.

#### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

- Imagine you are sitting in class and you don't know where you will eat or sleep when you leave school. What does that feel like? Would that change how you behave in class?
- What other challenges do you think children and youth who are homeless face while in school? What about after school like clubs and sports?

## **6) Why we do the Point-in-Time Count**

Think about things that you count that are important to you. The number of coins in your piggy bank. The number of stuffed animals on your bed. The number of friends who like your post. We also count the number of people who are homeless in our community because they matter to us. When we count people every year, we can keep track of whether that number is going up or down to tell us if we are doing better or worse at helping people get into housing. Counting people also reminds us that we need to think about the people who are homeless, the struggles that they are going through and the things we need to do differently to help everyone find a home.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

- The number of people last year that we counted was 1,476. Does that seem like a lot of people who are homeless?
- Do you think it might be possible that we cannot count everybody? Why do you think that might be and why do you think that matters?

## **I CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE | #EverybodyCountsCLT**

Children and youth can help make a difference in ending and preventing homelessness. The most important thing they can do is to develop empathy for people who experience homelessness by learning how homelessness is caused and why it matters for all of us.

Children and youth can also help by collecting items for toiletry kits that will be distributed during the Point-in-Time Count. These toiletry kits are important for adults and children who usually do not have all their belongings and must get ready – just like anyone of us – for bed at night and for work and school in the morning.

As you collect items and assemble them, you can reflect on the questions above as a family, at school or in small groups in various settings. You can also encourage children and youth to write notes of encouragement to include in the bags. This is another reminder that we are all connected and need to support one another, especially during a difficult experience like homelessness.

# TOILETRY KIT INSTRUCTIONS

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Below are instructions to create and deliver toiletry kits for the 2018 Point-in-Time Count. These kits will be distributed during the count to people in our community who are experiencing homelessness. We will collect items until January 29, 2018.

## STEP 1: COLLECT THESE ITEMS

### All Bags

- 1) Deodorant
- 2) Toothbrush
- 3) Travel sized Toothpaste
- 4) Floss
- 5) Washcloths
- 6) Travel sized Shampoo
- 7) Travel sized Conditioner
- 8) Travel sized Soap or Body Wash
- 9) Travel Pack of Wipes

### Optional

To make gender specific bags, you can add these items for women and men:

#### For Women:

- 1) Feminine products
- 2) Disposable razors

#### For Men:

- 1) Shaving Cream
- 2) Disposable razors

## STEP 2: ASSEMBLE ITEMS

- 1) Place all items into clear, sealable plastic bags. Label "men" or "women" on the bag where it is visible if the bag includes the gender specific items.
- 2) If possible, include in the bag a brief note of encouragement. Experiencing homelessness is scary and lonely. Including a note of encouragement that you are thinking of the person that receives the bag is a small and easy way to instill hope and help that person know that they are connected.

## **STEP 3: DELIVER ITEMS NOW UNTIL JANUARY 29**

- 1) Group completed kits and label grouped kits with "2018 Point-in-Time Count".
- 2) Deliver to Urban Ministry Center (945 North College St, Charlotte, NC 28206) between 8:30am and 4pm on Monday through Friday or on Saturday and Sunday from 9am to 12:30pm.

If you have any questions about the toiletry kits, email Allison Winston, who leads the Unsheltered Count, at [Awinston@urbanministrycenter.org](mailto:Awinston@urbanministrycenter.org)