



**FOR SCHOOLS & PARENTS**  
**7<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> Grade Students**

## **Project PJ**

Friday, Jan. 29, 2021

[ProjectPJ.org](http://ProjectPJ.org)

[#ProjectPJ](https://twitter.com/ProjectPJ)

### **Why pajamas?**

For most people, putting on pajamas before heading to bed is part of their daily routine. For hundreds of men, women and children who are homeless in Iowa, getting comfortable before bedtime, let alone finding a warm place to sleep at night, is not an option.

Project PJ serves as a visible reminder that everyone needs a warm, safe place to sleep. Whether your children are at school or learning from home, wear pajamas, slippers and robes to show your support for ending homelessness!

### **How to participate:**

1. All students, teachers, staff and parents are encouraged to wear their PJs on Friday, Jan. 29, 2021
2. Take a picture and upload it to Facebook, Twitter or Instagram
3. Use the hashtag [#ProjectPJ](https://twitter.com/ProjectPJ) to show your support!

### **In this packet, you'll find:**

- Homelessness Fact Sheet
- Activities for Teachers/Leaders
- Additional Lesson Plans & Resources

For more information, visit [ProjectPJ.org](http://ProjectPJ.org) or email [ProjectPJ@joppa.org](mailto:ProjectPJ@joppa.org).

# Homelessness Fact Sheet

## What is Homelessness?

There is no such thing as a “typical” homeless person, and the population is very diverse. People experiencing homelessness can live temporarily with friends or family or in an emergency shelter.

However, many homeless individuals are “unsheltered,” which means they are living in a place not meant for human habitation, such as under bridges, in vehicles, or in the woods.

## What Causes Homelessness?

Lack of affordable housing is the main cause of homelessness. In the U.S., 8 million extremely low-income households pay at least half of their income toward housing. That leaves little left to pay for food, medicine, transportation and childcare—which puts them at risk of housing instability and homelessness.

Other factors that can contribute to homelessness include: lack of employment opportunities, decline in available public assistance, lack of affordable health care, domestic violence, mental illness and addiction.

## Homelessness in the U.S.:

An estimated 567,715 people in the United States are experiencing homelessness on any given night—which is 17 out of every 10,000 people—according to the most recent national point-in-time estimate (January 2019).

- Homeless individuals are associated with every geographical region, family status, gender category, and racial/ethnic group
- 30% of people experiencing homelessness are families with children
- From 2018 to 2019, there were 83 incidents of anti-homeless violence; 39 homeless victims lost their lives
- Life expectancy for someone who is homeless can be 20-30 years younger than the general population

## Homelessness in Central Iowa:

Each day, 1,000 people are homeless in Central Iowa. Around 350 of these people can find relief in transitional housing and another 400 can find a bed at one of the local emergency shelters (with limited stays).

That leaves **about 250 men and women** with no options each night.

## How Can I Help?

- Educate yourself – Learning about homelessness builds understanding, compassion and helps prevent homelessness in future generations.
- Show respect – Treat homeless individuals like you would want to be treated. Greet them and show empathy when you see them on the street (while being smart about your safety).
- Donate – Organize a supply drive and collect winter coats, hats, gloves, clothes, toiletry items, food, blankets and more to [donate to Joppa](#) or another local food pantry or homeless shelter.
- Volunteer – Sign up to [volunteer for Joppa](#). Roles include sorting donations, helping with homeless outreach, organizing the Joppa Center, assisting with fundraising events, and more.
- Advocate – Write to local politicians, speak up at city council meetings, or post on social media to raise awareness about homelessness issues and advocate for transitional and permanent housing solutions.

Sources: National Alliance to End Homeless, National Coalition for the Homeless

## Activities for Teachers/Leaders

### 1. Supplies Drive

Set up collection boxes in the school common areas or classrooms to collect items to donate for homeless people. You can drop off the supplies at Joppa (2326 Euclid Avenue) on Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.- 4 p.m. See a [list of critical supplies needed](#).

### 2. Watch a Video

Watch one of the following videos on homelessness (please preview videos before showing to the class; some topics might need to include trigger warnings):

- [Reunited and Restored](#)
- [Faces of Homelessness III](#)
- [Ashley & Nelson: Left on the Side of the Road](#)

### 3. Living Wage Activity

Divide the students into family groups (2-5 students). Provide each group with information about their “family” (one single parent or two parents, ages of children) and their professions (include annual salary).

- Have students use the [Living Wage calculator](#); select Iowa and your county.
- Using the typical expenses for their household, create an annual budget that includes:
  - Food
  - Childcare
  - Medical
  - Housing
  - Transportation
  - Other (household supplies, toiletries, clothing, entertainment, etc.)
- Based on their annual salary, does their budget work? If not, they need to discuss what they can cut in their budget.
- Have each group present their situation and decisions to the rest of the class. Ask discussion questions.
  - What choices were difficult to make?
  - Based on your budget, how would a major event (i.e., a large medical bill or car accident) impact your family?
  - How does income affect housing? Education? Health?

### 4. Read Short Stories

Read stories of local homeless individuals and families:

- [Reunited and Restored](#)
- [A Family's Struggle](#)

## 5. Make a Blessing Bag

Have students make a “blessing bag.” Most importantly, add a letter or note of encouragement to each bag. Drop off the bags to Joppa, and we’ll distribute them to those in need. There are several types that can be put together:

- Toiletry items – deodorant, wipes, toothbrush and toothpaste, disposable razor, chap stick, soap, hand sanitizer
- Food/water/snack items – bottle of water, soft granola or protein bars, peanut butter crackers, pretzels, gum, mints
- First Aid kit – Band-Aids, triple-antibiotic ointment, gauze, medical tape, alcohol wipes, masks
- Water – reusable water bottle with flavored drink pouches

### Additional Lesson Plans:

[Unsheltered Lives: An Interdisciplinary Resource and Activity Guide for Teaching about Homelessness in Grades K-12](#), Committee on Temporary Shelter

[Teaching Resources](#), National Coalition for the Homeless

[Fact Sheets](#), National Coalition for the Homeless

### Additional Resources:

- National Coalition for the Homeless: <https://nationalhomeless.org>
- National Alliance to End Homelessness: <https://endhomelessness.org>
- National Center for Homeless Education: <https://nche.ed.gov>
- National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty: [www.nlchp.org](http://www.nlchp.org)
- Institute for Community Alliances: [www.icalliances.org](http://www.icalliances.org)

### About Joppa:

Joppa is a local, volunteer-based nonprofit organization that helps homeless people survive, find housing and rebuild their lives. Our mission is to create communities of unconditional love, support, and hope for the homeless, as we work together to prevent and ultimately end homelessness.

Joppa collaborates with community partners and helps homeless people access existing resources by mobilizing private donations from families, churches, and corporations to meet unmet needs in homeless services, housing, and education.

Since 2008, Joppa has helped over 450 individuals and families get off the streets. More than 80% of these men, women and children remain in housing today.

For more information, visit [joppa.org](http://joppa.org).