

BACKGROUND: Family Homelessness in Regina

- Family homelessness is often hidden—and for that reason is often perceived as not being as urgent. Hidden homelessness means that women and children are off the streets—but are victims of violence, are trading sex for shelter, are couch-surfing short-term and moving from one home to another, or living in unhealthy and unsafe environments.
- Data on hidden homelessness are inherently hard to verify. Research suggests that for every homeless person who is visible and countable, there are two or three others who are the hidden homeless. We can state with confidence that there are many hundreds of homeless people in Regina, and that most of them remain hidden.
- We also know that the need in Regina is clearly not declining. Shelters are filled to capacity and are turning people away. (For example, while YWCA My Aunt’s Place sheltered 358 women and 118 children in 2016, 768 women and 503 children were turned away for lack of space.)
- The 2015 Regina Point-in-Time homelessness count found that 36.8% of Regina’s homeless were children under 18, and 13.6% of those surveyed in the count reported a total of 30 accompanying minors with them.
- Many Regina residents are on the edge of homelessness: the City of Regina says that 1 in 10 rental units in the city require major repairs. Almost 45% of Regina renters are spending more than 30% of their income on rental shelter costs, leading to higher housing instability and greater risk of homelessness (Vital Signs, 2016).
- Homelessness is a substantial cost to the community—including direct costs of shelters and support services, the increased indirect costs associated with homelessness (policing, health services, and criminal justice), and the lost economic benefits when part of the population is unable to work or contribute to a revenue base.
- “In a 2005 study which looked at costs in four Canadian cities, institutional responses (jails, hospitals etc.) cost \$66,000-\$120,000 annually, emergency shelters cost \$13,000-\$42,000 annually whereas supportive and transitional housing cost \$13,000-\$18,000 and affordable housing without supports was a mere \$5,000-\$8,000” (Gaetz et al, 2016).
- The impacts of family homelessness are immediate—but also long-term and multi-generational:
 - Homeless children are 4 times more likely to have developmental delays (doorwaysva.org).
 - “Homeless children face multiple, profound risks to their health.... more health problems even than poor children who have housing.” Half of homeless children experience two or more illnesses per month.*
 - “Homeless children experience stress through constant change, and these stressful changes accumulate as these children grow older.”*
 - “The average homeless child moves as many as three times in a year”—with significant impacts on health and educational outcomes throughout their lives.*
 - “Homeless children are seven times more likely than other children to be placed in foster care” (22% compared to 3% of housed children.)*
- * Family Housing Fund, “Homelessness and its Effects on Children” (fhfund.org).
- Ending family homelessness is an opportunity to leverage our impact. Beyond benefiting one life for one generation, we’re impacting 2, 3, or 4 children’s lives, with implications for generations to come.
- At YWCA My Aunt’s Place, most families seek more than emergency housing and food—including help with long-term housing, health referrals, parenting support, income and food security, and more. Outreach staff work closely with families for up to one year—helping maintain stable homes, connecting them with community supports, and “being there” as a source of encouragement.

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