



HOMELESSNESS *in* MARIN

FAQ

MISSION: EDUCATING AND INSPIRING COMMUNITY ACTION TO HELP PREVENT AND END HOMELESSNESS IN MARIN.

How many people in Marin do not have a safe, stable place to call home?

Every two years, Marin conducts a count of persons experiencing homelessness. On the last week in January 2013, 933 people were counted as living in various states of homelessness. This includes persons in shelters, transitional housing, living in motels, staying with friends or family due to loss of housing and persons living in places such as streets, camps and cars.

What does being homeless mean?

Any person who lacks a fixed, regular or adequate night-time address is considered homeless. This includes persons in emergency shelters and transitional housing programs as these programs are short-term, not permanent housing solutions.

Why do people in Marin become homeless?

There are many reasons why someone may become homeless; the top reason for homelessness in Marin is the lack of affordable housing, followed by loss of a job.¹ In Marin 35% of household's do not make enough to make ends meet and the majority of a household's income goes towards housing.² An unexpected illness or loss of a job can quickly spiral a household into homelessness.

Who in Marin experiences homelessness?

Homelessness can and does afflict persons of every ethnic, religious, educational and social background.³ Marin does not have a large population of what could be considered visible homeless, such as persons who are seen sleeping on streets, sidewalks or open spaces. Instead, Marin has a large invisible population of persons experiencing homelessness. These are individuals and families with children, who more often than not, are out of the public view. They camp in the expansive open space throughout the county, or may be in motels, in cars, or temporarily living with family or friends.

Why don't they just get jobs?⁴

According to national statistics, approximately 24% of all adults experiencing homelessness are employed full-time. The wages gained through employment are more often not enough to secure affordable housing. Job seeking without housing also presents many challenges; the lack of an address, phone, access to clean clothing and a place to keep clean can prevent any individual from securing employment. The lack of jobs that provide sufficient earnings combined with the shrinking affordable housing market make it increasingly difficult for a household experiencing homelessness to raise its standard of living and obtain adequate housing.

Why don't they just go somewhere else?⁵

Studies on homelessness indicate that most people will generally remain within the community in which they become homeless. The presence of family and friends, a familiarity with the area and its resources, and the fear of being homeless in a new or unfamiliar area all create a natural reluctance to leave the community that has been their home. Many also lack the financial resources to relocate.

Many who become homeless believe that they will have a better chance of getting back on their feet if they are in a familiar environment. Persons with disabilities, older adults, and families with children are least likely to leave the area in which they lived prior to homelessness.

Don't most people experiencing homelessness have mental or substance abuse problems?

Persons struggling with mental health or substance abuse problems are often the most visible segment of the population experiencing homeless however they represent a small percentage (between 15-20%) of all persons who experience homelessness.

www.HomeforallMarin.org

¹ 2009 Point in Time Count Report, County of Marin Health & Human Services.

² Making Ends Meet

³ SLO Homeless <http://slohomeless.wordpress.com/>

⁴ SLO Homeless <http://slohomeless.wordpress.com/>

⁵ ibid