

Iowans Experiencing Homelessness

Annual Snapshot of Service and Shelter Use

A report to the Governor of the State of Iowa on behalf of the Iowa Council on Homelessness, prepared by the Iowa Institute for Community Alliances.

January 2006—December 2006



19,233

Is the number of Iowans that were homeless and received services from I-Count agencies in 2006

What does this mean?

It means that **19,233** people in Iowa needed assistance in 2006 and that assistance was provided by the last string of the safety net, our homeless service network. An additional **9,864** Iowans were at risk of becoming homeless and were served by these agencies to prevent homelessness. **This is not a homeless census; rather, this is a homeless service count for 2006.**

Putting it into Perspective -

A total of **29,075** people were homeless or near homeless in 2006 and were served by a reporting agency. It seems like a lot of people, and in fact, it is! It is as if the entire population of Mason City, our 15th largest city, was in desperate need of assistance; or the entire population of Coralville lost their homes. In fact, 77 Iowa counties have populations smaller than the number of people served by these programs.

Real people, not an estimate -

This is a real number of actual people in need, **11,141** of whom were under the age of 18. These are people in crisis and stress, unimaginable to most of us.

Who are we missing?

We know that many people are missing from this number.

- *Families are under-reported for several reasons. We have very few shelters for families, and information is not recorded for people who are turned away for lack of space. Also, some domestic violence shelters did not submit information for this report. Lastly, many people, particularly families, avoid shelters, living instead in cars or doubling up with another family.*
- *Veterans often fail to report their status to providers and federally funded, Veteran-specific programs do not participate in this data effort.*
- *Information for children in families is not always recorded by providers, and children are often left in another's care while a parent is in a shelter.*
- *Individuals - Many faith-based facilities do not receive government dollars and choose to not participate in the statewide data network. In some cases, these programs account for a significant number of beds in a community.*

Why should we care?

There are many reasons why Iowans should care about this problem.

Costs - When people become homeless, everything becomes more difficult and more expensive. Involvement in more “systems” increases, and more assistance is required.

Education - In the day of “no children left behind,” we continually handicap our homeless children. Estimates indicate that three to six months of education are lost every time a child moves.* Unfortunately, homeless families often move several times before finding permanent housing. Mitigating this loss benefits these kids, our schools and eventually our workforce.

Health - “Housing is Health Care.” We all know the incredible costs of health care over the last 20 years. Without stable housing, pre-existing conditions are aggravated, routine health care is ignored and high risks of catastrophic health problems increase. Providing shelter and housing saves ambulance trips, emergency room visits and lives.

The right thing to do - Iowa has a tradition of stepping up to help those in need. Assisting those with the least, improves their situation and improves the quality of life for all of us.

* “Education of Homeless Children and Youth”
National Coalition for the Homeless, June 2006

Our Hope . . .

Is that this report makes real the extent of need in our communities, recognizes the hard work done by our service agencies and results in policy changes to improve services to those in need; ensuring that homelessness be avoided when possible and to help minimize the impact when it cannot.

Families Experiencing Homelessness In 2006

“It’s scary, real scary because when you have no place to go you’re stuck. Two days ago when our stuff was on the street, I felt embarrassed because I didn’t want any of my friends to see me. I also felt lost. It felt like no one cares...It is so hard to not have a place to go.”

-Karla, age 12

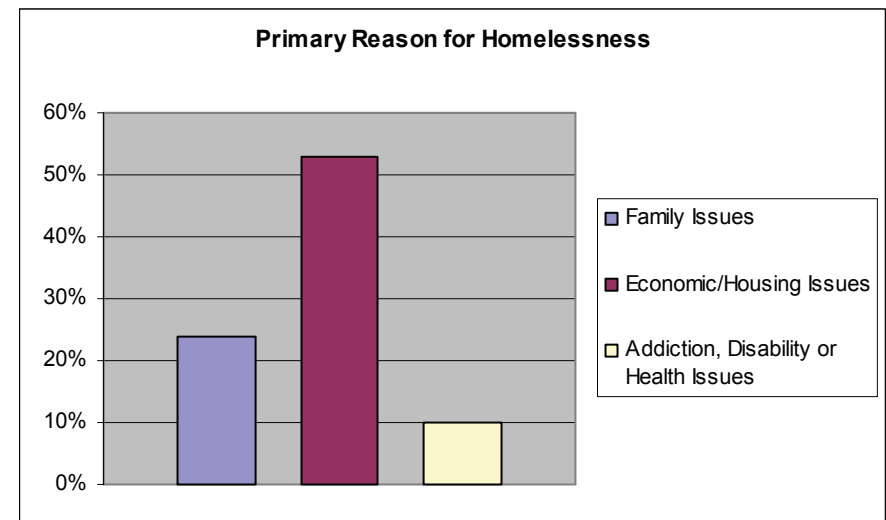


Service agencies helped **9,591** homeless Iowans
in families during 2006

56% of homeless families experienced homelessness for the first time in 2006

1/4 of homeless families are working poor

28% of homeless adults in families
reported a long-term disability



58% of homeless people in families are children

5% of homeless families lived on
the streets prior to receiving services

59% of adults in families have completed high
school or received their G.E.D.

Individuals Experiencing Homelessness In 2006

*"It's hard to be
motivated when
you're homeless --
I needed a
foundation."*

Mike,
Formerly chronically
homeless individual,
now living in
permanent housing



15% of homeless individuals are under 18

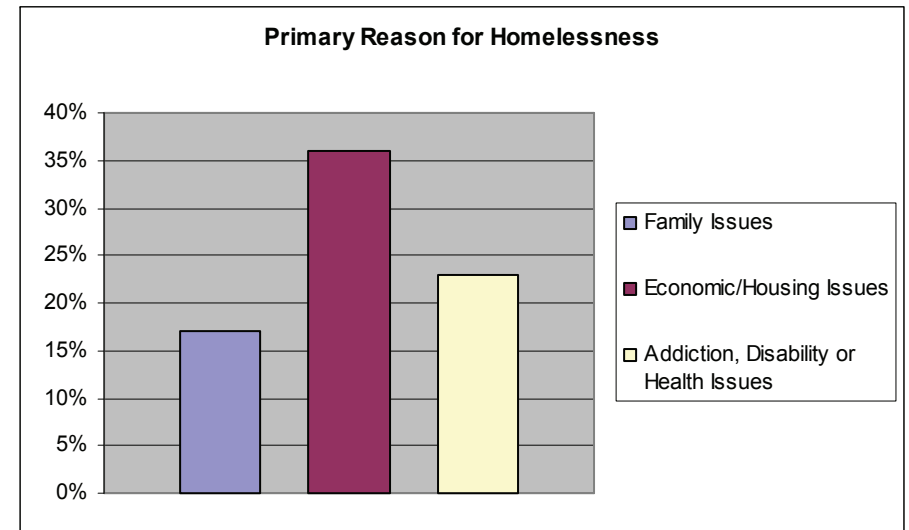
64% of homeless individuals have
been homeless in the past

11% of individuals had been
living on the streets prior to
receiving services

1/2 of homeless adult individuals report a long term disability

**One out of ten homeless adult individuals
served in the Armed Forces**

16% of adults are employed
when beginning services



57% Homeless individuals have completed high
school or received their G.E.D.

Service providers helped **10,116** homeless individuals in 2006

Economic/ Housing issues were the largest reason for homelessness for both families and individuals

4 out of **10** homeless Iowans are **children**.

Nearly 60% of both adults in families and individuals completed high school or received their GED. This compares to 90% of adult Iowans in the last census.



Homeless Iowans live in virtually every county in the state.

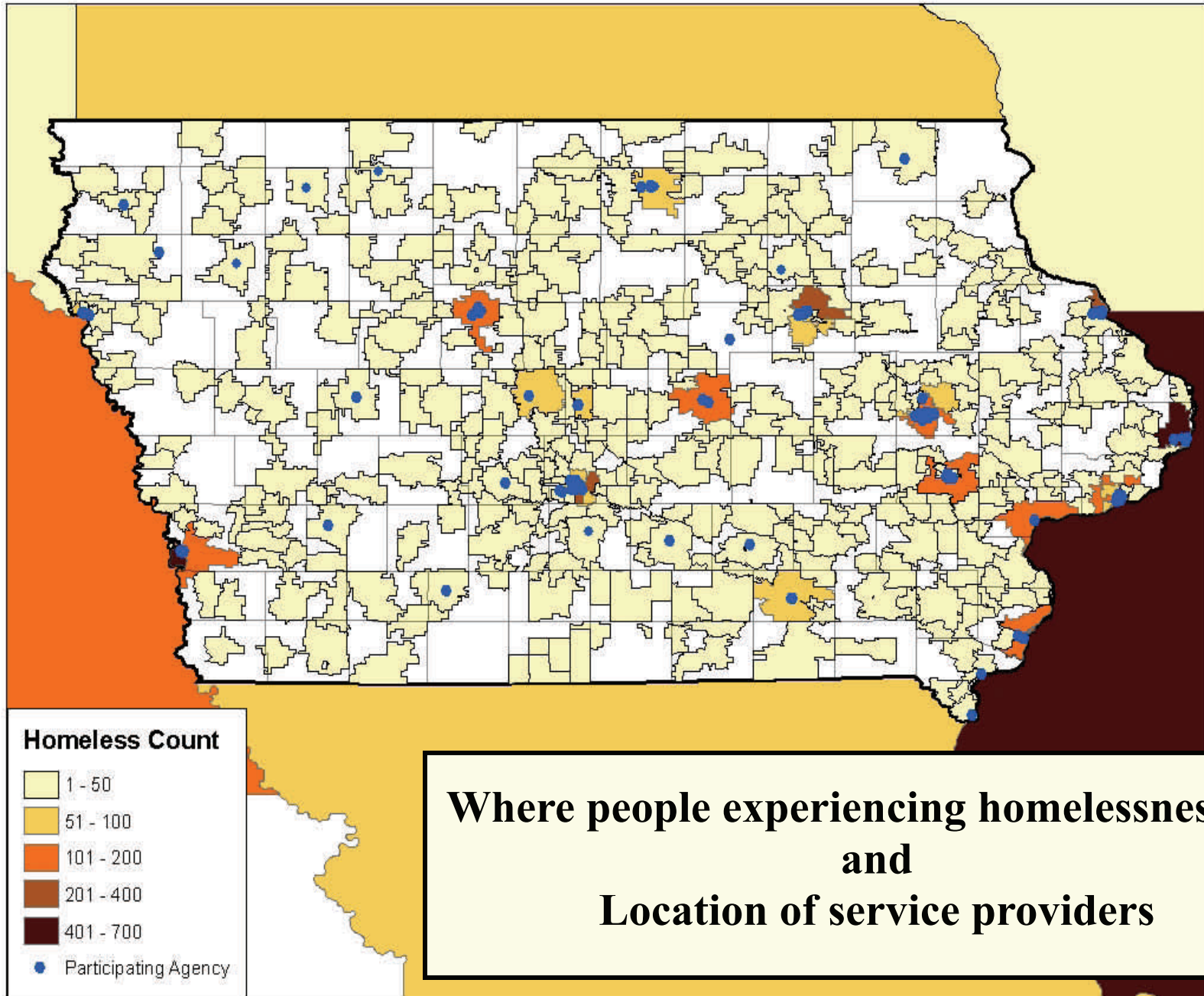
*The number of homeless and near homeless served last year would be Iowa's **16th** largest city.*

5 out of **10** homeless Iowans are in families, yet there are just **6** Emergency family units available in Des Moines for two-parent families.

"Affordable, decent housing is the key to finding your way out of homelessness. A place to call home should come first, and after that they can plan goals."

Homeless Support Service Provider, Des Moines

Homeless and near homeless clients lived in 96 counties across the state last year



Additional Facts

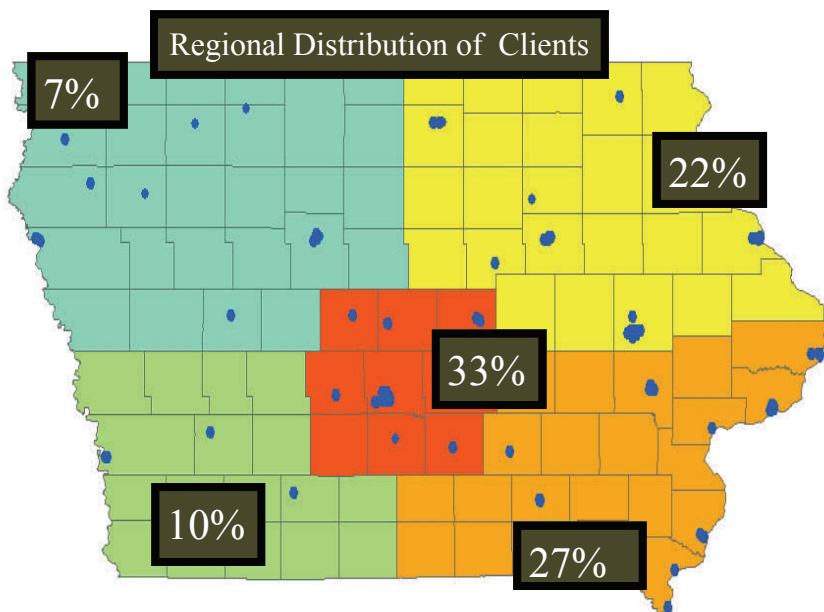
9,888 people stayed in
Emergency Shelter in 2006 *

4,239 people stayed in
Transitional Housing in 2006 *

* Please note exclusions listed on page 3

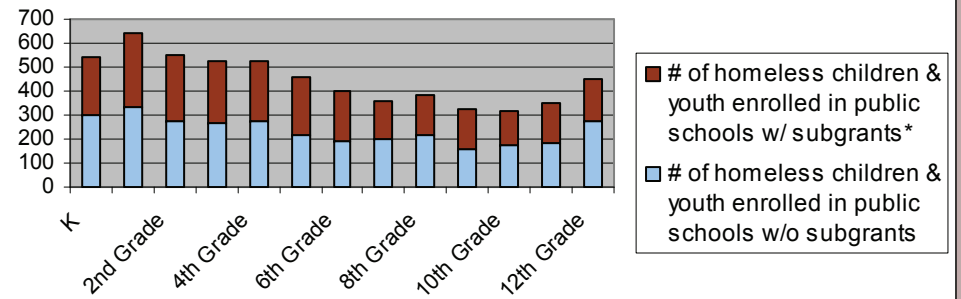
There are **423** Homeless Liaisons, at
least one in every school district in
Iowa.

The top three barriers to school enroll-
ment are transportation, immunizations,
and lack of school records.

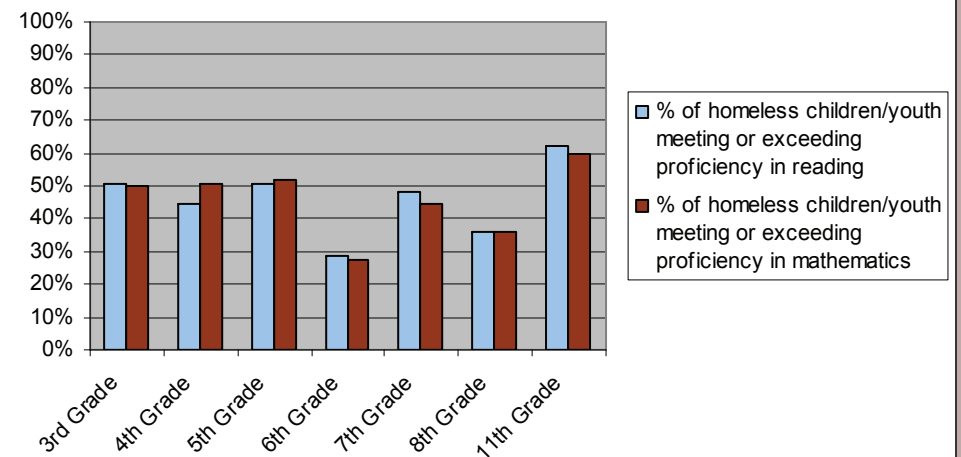


EDUCATIONAL REALITIES

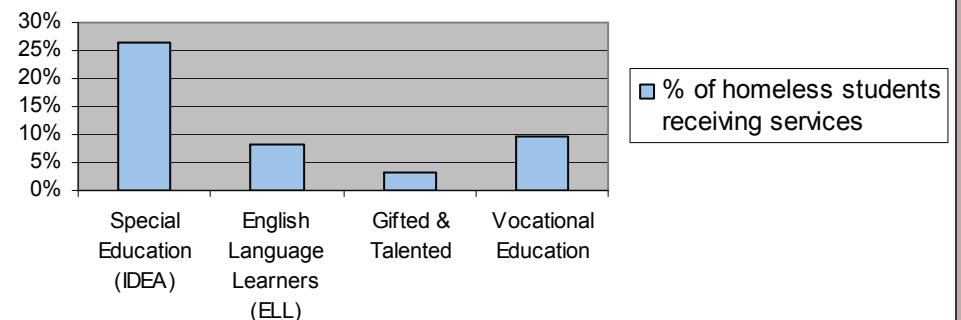
Grade Level of Homeless Children *



Homeless Children at Risk *



Services provided to homeless students by
McKinney-Vento Subgrantees *

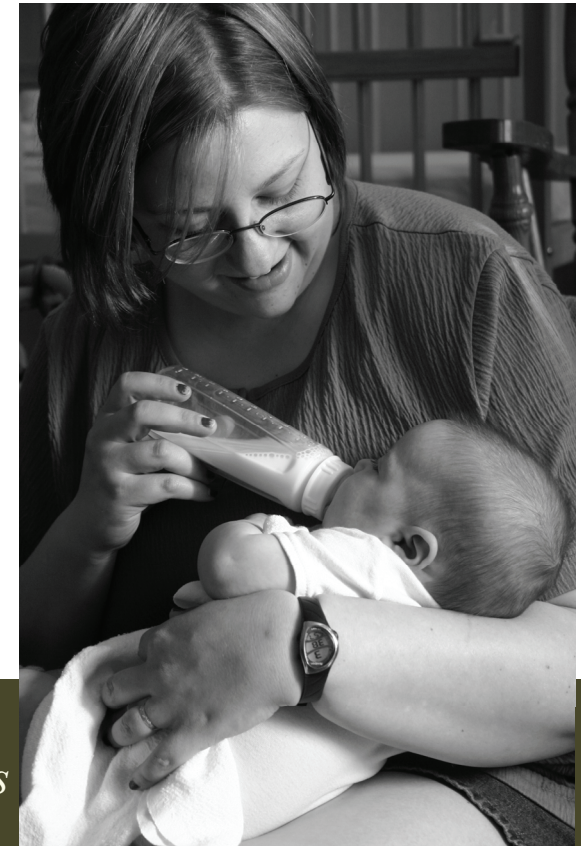


* Data provided by the Iowa Department of Education

Thank You. . .

- To all of the service providers that work tirelessly to assist our neighbors in need.
- To the volunteers that give time and financial resources to help make programs successful.
- To our state officials who have continued to recognize the impact of this issue on Iowans.
- To the Iowa Department of Education for providing information for this report and financial support to assist with printing costs.
- And a special thanks to the Iowa Finance Authority and the Iowa Department of Economic Development for their support of our work.

We sincerely thank you for your efforts to make Iowa a great place to live.



We also would like to acknowledge the support and assistance in this effort of the Michigan Coalition to End Homelessness, the HMIS Technical Assistance Initiative of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, and Ananda Subramanian with United Way of Central Iowa

About our Organization -

The Iowa Institute for Community Alliances has worked in partnership with service providing agencies for more than 12 years and has been involved in the evolving “science” of data collection during this period. It is our hope that we can assist the service providers by giving them the tools to demonstrate their success. Please contact our organization if you have any questions regarding this report or the work that we do.

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Wee, wee, wee, all the way . . .

Everybody deserves a home