



HHUG

Teacher Toolkit - Secondary Grades 9-12

A resource package designed to assist educators in teaching students about homelessness



Teacher Toolkit

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For more information about this Toolkit, please contact:

Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group

519.743.2460 x356

hhug@lutherwood.ca

An Elementary Toolkit is available online at:

www.hhug.ca

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We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to big differences that we often cannot foresee.

—Marian Wright Edelman

Introductory Note

In the Region of Waterloo planning document, *All Roads Lead to Home: A Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy for Waterloo Region*, Ken Seiling, Regional Chair, stated:

There is a role for everyone to play in ending homelessness – all orders of government, community groups, the private sector and ordinary citizens. Together we can ensure that everyone in Waterloo Region has a place to call home.

Thank you for playing your role in ending homelessness through teaching your students about this important societal issue. Education is an essential component in creating an inclusive community where no one experiences homelessness.

The Teacher Toolkit (the Toolkit) was created by the Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group (HHUG). The HHUG is a non-partisan group consisting of concerned individuals, including individuals with lived experience, agencies and groups committed to preventing and reducing homelessness in Waterloo Region (www.hhug.ca).

This resource was designed to provide you with the tools and information necessary to teach children about local and broad issues of homelessness in an age-appropriate manner. The information and materials in this guide are designed for secondary students – Grades 9-12 – but elements can be adapted for younger students as well.

The lesson plans are designed to be thorough and detailed, so that they are easily adaptable for any classroom environment. We suggest that teachers begin any lesson associated with homelessness by leading a discussion with students about what they already know about homelessness. As a tool for discussion, teachers can use *The Truth about Homelessness Worksheet* (p.6) as a starting point. An “answer key” is provided to assist teachers in addressing misconceptions about people who do not have a home.

In addition, Home Free, created by the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario provides excellent supplementary lesson plan ideas (www.etfo.ca/Resources/ForTeachers/ → search “Home Free”).

Thank you again for working to end homelessness through educating students. We hope that this resource will be a valuable tool for you.



Acknowledgements

The Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group (HHUG) would like to thank the members of the School-Based Sub-Committee including Sharon Froehlich, Heather Papp, Julie Hornick-Martyk, Charles Nichols, Mary Olajide, Bethany Wagler-Mantle, and Lindsey White. These individuals provided the passion, skills, and time necessary to complete the toolkit. Heather Papp and Bethany Wagler-Mantle authored the Toolkit.

The HHUG would also like to thank both the Waterloo Region District School Board and the Waterloo Catholic District School Board for their support and input in the development and distribution of this resource.

Finally, the HHUG would like to thank you, teachers, for educating your students about this important issue in our community.



I am glad that I have somewhere to go so that my mom doesn't worry about me. She has to worry about finding us a place to live.
—15 year old staying at Safe Haven Shelter (Kitchener) after family was evicted

What is Homelessness and Why is it Worth Talking About?

❖ What is homelessness?

There is no universal agreement on the definition of homelessness because it is not easily defined. The HHUG defines homelessness as:

- People are **at-risk of homelessness** when their housing is unaffordable, unsafe, overcrowded, insecure, inappropriate, or poorly maintained, and when they lack the support necessary to maintain stability in their lives.
- People experience **hidden homelessness** when they are living in temporary accommodations such as with family or friends.
- People experience **absolute homelessness** when they are staying in emergency shelters or sleeping in places not intended for livings (i.e., in cars, on streets, under bridges).

❖ Why do people experience homelessness?

Poverty is one of the main causes of homelessness. People who are without adequate housing, income and support are more likely to fall into homelessness. They do not have resources that help them to maintain stability in their lives following a catastrophic event like a car accident, illness or loss of employment (also known as “trigger events”). For others, it may not be so much a “trigger event” as a “tipping point”, when the slow build up of increasing debt, arrears and/or personal issues, reaches a breaking point. People can avoid losing their housing by ensuring that where they live is affordable and by staying connected to the support they need to maintain stability in their lives.

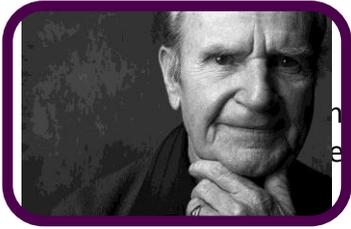
❖ Who experiences homelessness in the Waterloo Region?

People of all ages, genders, and backgrounds experience homelessness.

In Canada, at least 150,000 to 300,000 people are living in shelters or on the streets (Homelessness Partnering Strategy, 2009). This is not a full count of absolute homelessness because it does not include people sleeping in places not intended for living or people experiencing hidden homelessness.

❖ What is the impact of experiencing homelessness on adults and children?

Homelessness severely reduces an individual's quality of life. Studies have shown that people experiencing homelessness are more likely to die younger and have significantly poorer physical and mental health than their housed counterparts. The experience of homelessness for children also has many negative consequences including: poor health and nutrition; poor hygiene; low self-esteem; unwillingness to form relationships with peers; difficulty trusting people; short



I am not a lesser person because I am a person experiencing homelessness. Homelessness also presents significant barriers to school en.
—Kitchener community member

What is Homelessness and Why is it Worth Talking About?

❖ How can we end homelessness?

In order for people to reduce their risk of homelessness, they must have housing stability. To maintain housing stability over the long term, the following three criteria must be met:

- The **housing** must be accessible, safe, adequately maintained, of suitable size, affordable, provide security of tenure and be considered acceptable by the individual.
- People must have enough **income** to sustain the minimum standards for rent, utilities, food, health, clothing, education, transportation, and recreation.
- People must have the opportunity to access additional **support**, as needed, to help individuals live as independently as desired and to connect to others in meaningful ways.

❖ Why should students learn about homelessness?

Homelessness is an important issue in our community, country, and world. Teaching children about homelessness has the potential for significant impact on the lives of the students and their communities. As a result of learning about homelessness, students will:

- become more compassionate, caring, and empathetic towards others;
- dismantle stereotypes and reduce judgmental attitudes;
- develop an appreciation for diversity, while recognizing wide-spread commonalities;
- enhance their capacity for critical thinking and moral reasoning; and
- appreciate and participate in community initiatives and organizations.

❖ References

- Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group Report Card Booklet (2009).
- Homelessness Partnering Strategy (2009).
<http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/homelessness/index.shtml>
- Inventory of Housing Stability Programs in Waterloo Region (2009).
- Decter, A. (2007). Lost in the Shuffle: The Impact of Homelessness on Children's Education in Toronto. http://intraspec.ca/KidBuildersPhase3_FinalReport.pdf

Suggestions for Guiding Classroom Learning about Homelessness

❖ General Guidelines

We recognize that lessons on homelessness can be challenging for both teachers and students. Thoughtful planning should take place when teaching any lesson on social issues, including homelessness. Listed below are some suggestions for introducing and guiding classroom learning about homelessness.

- Encourage open discussion about what students might already know about homelessness and outline any questions they might have.
- Address stereotypes as they arise with facts (i.e., The Truth about Homelessness).
- Help students become more aware of what their home means to them. Link what their home means to them to how they might feel if they did not have a home.
- Explain that being homeless means that one does not have a place to call home. It might be for a day or two or for many weeks or months. Talk about how difficult it is.
- Help students understand that being homeless doesn't mean that someone has done something wrong. It isn't an illness and it certainly isn't anything someone wants. It can be a result of difficult times in a person's life.
- Discuss the different places people might live if they don't have a home (i.e., shelter, car, with friends).
- Explain that there are single people, families, and children who do not have a home.
- Read stories and books about people from all walks of life and/or about homelessness. Help students to realize that in spite of differences, people experience many of the same feelings.
- Conclude discussions of homelessness with ideas about how students and communities can help people who don't have a home.

❖ Language

As a community we are working to speak about homelessness using respectful language. We encourage community members to use "people-first" language, acknowledging homelessness as a (usually) temporary state of being. In the classroom, it is important to demonstrate respectful ways of talking about issues of homelessness. Below are some suggestions for language to use when discussing homelessness.

- The phrase "person experiencing homelessness" is preferred over "homeless person".
- In child-friendly language, the phrase "someone who doesn't have a home" is preferred over "homeless person".
- When discussing different conditions, use terms such as issues or disorders and not problems or illness. For example, "person with a mental health issue" is preferred over "mentally ill person".

The Truth about Homelessness Worksheet

Circle true or false for each of these statements.

1. There are people who don't have a home.

True / False

2. People choose not to have a home. They could get a home if they wanted to.

True / False

3. All people without a home sleep on the street.

True / False

4. There are children who don't have a home.

True / False

5. People without homes are lazy and don't work.

True / False

6. It would be cool to not have a home because you can go anywhere and do anything that you want.

True / False

7. All people who don't have a home are addicted to drugs or alcohol.

True / False

8. Homelessness only happens in big cities.

True / False

9. If we had more homes there would be no homelessness.

True / False

10. There is nothing we can do about homelessness.

True / False

The Truth about Homelessness Worksheet Answers

1. There are people who don't have a home.

True. Homelessness is a big issue for many cities. The number of people who stay at emergency shelters is one way to measure homelessness. We must remember that the number of people who stay at shelters does not include people who choose not to stay at shelters or who “hide” their homelessness by staying with friends or family.

2. People choose not to have a home. They could get a home if they wanted to.

False. No one chooses to be homeless. Most people are shocked when it happens to them. Most people who don't have a home want one. However, it is very hard to find a safe home that people can afford. Some people also need extra support, like nursing care, to keep their homes. There are long waiting lists for these supports.

3. All people without a home sleep on the street.

False. People who sleep outside are just part of the total group of people who don't have a home. Some people stay in emergency shelters. Other people stay in their car or with a friend or family member—this type of homelessness is called “hidden homelessness”.

4. There are children who don't have a home.

True. There are people of all ages and genders who don't have a home. The number of children staying in emergency shelters is growing. There are also children who experience hidden homelessness.

5. People without homes are lazy and don't work.

False. People who have no home often have to work very hard to find places to eat and sleep. Also, many people who don't have a home want to get jobs. Some people who don't have a home have jobs. Other people have a hard time finding a job for reasons like health concerns.

6. It would be cool to not have a home because you can go anywhere and do anything that you want.

False. When you have no home it is very hard to find places to eat, sleep, and shower. It is also hard to find transportation. People who don't have a home also have to think about their safety.

The Truth about Homelessness Worksheet Answers (page 2)

7. All people who don't have a home are addicted to drugs or alcohol.

False. *Some* people who don't have a home use substances like drugs or alcohol. Many other people without a home do not use substances like drugs or alcohol.

8. Homelessness only happens in big cities.

False. There are people who have no home everywhere. In smaller towns and villages, there are fewer formal programs like shelters to help people who don't have a home. In these areas, people might experience "hidden homelessness". In cities, people who don't have a home can more easily find emergency shelters and supports for their housing.

9. If we had more homes there would be no homelessness.

False. To end homelessness, people need more than just stable homes. They also need income and supports. People need a safe and secure home that they think is right for them. They also need enough income to meet their basic needs, such as shelter, food, clothing, and transportation. People also need different types of support, from friends and family and other people in the community to keep their homes for a long time. Homelessness can be ended with these three things—housing, income, and supports.

10. There is nothing we can do about homelessness.

False. Everyone has a part to play in ending homelessness. Students can help by writing letters to leaders asking them to end homelessness. You can also donate your time to an organization working to support people who don't have a home. Lots of these organizations also need donations of supplies like shampoo and socks to give to people who don't have a home. Finally, you can tell others about why people don't have homes and the things that can be done to make sure that everyone in your community has a home.

❖ **References**

- Cambridge Action on Homelessness Group (2009). Myths and Facts about Homelessness.
- Inventory of Housing Stability Programs in Waterloo Region (2009).

❖ **Lesson Data**

Lesson Topic: Homelessness

Time: 50 minutes

Overarching Objective

This lesson prepares students to address important societal issues by acquainting them with homelessness. The lesson will help students identify the different situations that families experiencing homelessness may experience. They will also identify the important aspects of having a place to call home.

❖ **Materials**

- Small pieces of paper (5 pieces per student)
- Chart paper and markers

❖ **Procedure**

Anticipatory Set/Motivation

- Introduce the importance of home in our lives. Give a personal example: “I remember being so glad to get home because...”
- Ask students to work in pairs and write the things that make home important to them (i.e., pets, television, privacy, family, etc). Have students share their responses. Record the most frequent responses.

Activity

- Ask students to rip a sheet of paper into five pieces.
- On each piece they should identify one item that represents what home means to them (using only one or two words).
- Discuss some of these as a large group.
- Ask students to identify which slip of paper contains the item that is of least importance to them. Have them crumple it up (and ideally throw in to a large garbage can).
- Then tell the student next to them to randomly grab one of the slips and throw it out.
- Identify a few items and tell students that they need to throw out their slips if they contain anything you mention (i.e. food, warmth, TV, computer).
- You can keep going on this, taking away different slips until all are gone, or leave them with one or two.
- Discuss in the class how it felt to see prioritized areas slip away.
- Remind the class that for most homeless people this is what happens, and is often in fact why they are on the street. Homeless people by and large have lost their friends and families, and all of the things that they had previously identified as being part of “home” for them.

Reinforcement/Independent work

- Ask students to write a journal reflection on how they felt during the activity. What did they feel like when important items were “taken away?” What did they learn about the importance of having a home?
- Interview 5-10 family members, friends or classmates about their sense of home. What are the most important issues for them? Create a chart that shows the areas of similarity and difference.

❖ **Assessment**

- Review and assess student reflections. Check for understanding regarding the meaning of home.
- Evaluate students’ ability to prepare and complete their interviews.
- Students will also be assessed on their independent work and ability to follow oral instructions. Participation in larger group discussion will also be assessed. Assess students on their abilities to actively engage in discussion and to follow classroom discussion rules.

❖ **Academic & Other Considerations**

Diversity/ Accommodations/Special Needs

- Be attentive to students who may respond to the lesson with feelings of shame or embarrassment due to personal experiences of conflict or homelessness.
- A scribe can be used during the reflection for students who need the extra support with writing responses.

Remedial/Enrichment Activities

- If the student required additional help in understanding the concept, the student can be given other homelessness themed literature to reinforce the concept.
- Individual discussion to explore the concept further.

❖ **Additional Teaching Tools**

Teacher Reflection Questions

- Did the topic of homelessness bring up any personal experiences from the students?
- Could I have used a form of technology to get the idea across in a different way?
- Were the different types of learners all equally engaged in this lesson format?
- Did everyone participate in the activity? Is there another activity I can implement to foster further understanding?
- Did I allow for enough time to discuss the topic?
- Did individual students need more time to complete the journal reflection, given the seriousness of the topic?

❖ **Reference**

- Toronto Disaster Relief Centre <http://tdrc.net/resources/public/TeachingGuide.htm>

❖ Lesson Data

Lesson Topic: Homelessness

Time: 90 minutes

Overarching Objective

This lesson prepares students to address important societal issues by acquainting them with homelessness. The lesson will help students identify the different situations that families experiencing homelessness may experience. They will also identify the various level so f homelessness and the continuum of homelessness.

❖ Materials

- Chart paper and markers
- Internet
- Telephone book

❖ Procedure

Anticipatory Set/Motivation

- Separate students into groups of 3-4. Give each group a piece of chart paper and a set of markers.
- Have students brainstorm a list of words that they think describe homeless people in general. Tell them to feel free to bring up things that they don't believe to be true necessarily but words that they have heard in the media, from family and friends or just generally in society. This generally takes some prompting as the list will start out with niceties, and it takes some work to create a freedom to express stereotypes.
- Allow each group to share some of the words they came up with. Encourage larger class discussion on stereotypes of the homeless population.

Activity

- Make a chart on the Board with the following sections: Absolute Homelessness, Hidden Homelessness and At Risk of Homelessness
- Read/circulate the following descriptions:
- **At Risk of Homelessness:** someone whose housing is unaffordable, unsafe, overcrowded, insecure, inappropriate, or poorly maintained, and when they lack the support necessary to maintain stability in their lives.
- **Hidden Homelessness:** people who are living in temporary accommodations such as with family or friends. People who fall into this category are not seen by most people as being homeless.
- **Absolute homelessness:** People who are staying in emergency shelters or sleeping in places not intended for living (i.e., in cars, on streets, under bridges).
- Ask students to return to their groups and to think of types of people that fit into each category. Have each group write their ideas on chart paper.
- Answers may vary (and cross into more than one category) but could include:

- **At Risk for Homelessness:** children in foster care, people in jail or other institutions, substance abuse users, people living in abusive situations, people paying more than 30% of their income on rent, people who are unemployed, underemployed or on social assistance, refugees, people who live in places that are not properly maintained, etc.
- **Hidden Homelessness:** children in foster care, people in jail or other institutions, people doubling up with friends and family, people who sleep on a friend's couch otherwise known as "couch-surfing."
- **Absolute Homelessness:** people living on the streets, in cars, in tents, in shelters.
- Have students return to the larger class and discuss their findings.

Reinforcement/Independent work

- Ask students to write a plan of action on what they would do if a friend or family member just told them that they were homeless and had no place to go. What services are available in our own community to support people without homes? Make a list of services, including eligibility criteria, type of support and contact information.
- What other things do you think that a person without a home needs? Make a list of items that you feel they may need and come up with an action plan to find the resources to meet these needs. Some examples could include income, food, clothing for job interview, housing listings, access to phone, newspapers or internet, etc.
- Internet and phone book resources can be used.

❖ **Assessment**

- Review and assess student plans of action. Check for relevance.
- Students will also be assessed on their independent work and ability to follow oral instructions. Participation in larger group discussion will also be assessed. Assess students on their abilities to actively engage in discussion and to follow classroom discussion rules.

❖ **Academic & Other Considerations**

Diversity/ Accommodations/Special Needs

- Be attentive to students who may respond to the lesson with feelings of shame or embarrassment due to personal experiences of conflict or homelessness.

Remedial/Enrichment Activities

- Offer homelessness themed literature to reinforce the concept.
- Students can develop a brochure, fact sheet or other resource for youth who might be without a home outlining possible resources in the community for help.

❖ **Additional Teaching Tools**

Teacher Reflection Questions

- Did the topic of homelessness bring up any personal experiences from the students?
- Were the different types of learners all equally engaged in this lesson format?
- Did everyone participate in the activity?

❖ **Reference**

- Toronto Disaster Relief Centre <http://tdrc.net/resources/public/TeachingGuide.htm>

❖ Lesson Data

Lesson Topic: Homelessness, Budgeting

Time: 60 minutes

Overarching Objective

This lesson prepares students to address the cost of living on your own in Waterloo Region. The lesson will help students identify the different situations that families experiencing homelessness may experience. They will also identify the important aspects of budgeting and prioritizing needs versus wants.

❖ Materials

- Case Scenarios
- Budgeting worksheet
- Ontario Works Rates
- Calculators

❖ Procedure

Anticipatory Set/Motivation

- Ask the following discussion questions, “How many people have a job?” “What things do you like to buy yourself when you get paid?” “What are the items that you absolutely need every month?” “What are the items that you WANT every month?”
- Continue asking questions about “Do your parents help you pay for the things that you want or need?” “How could you afford these things if you were living on your own?”
- Generate larger group discussion. Identify items that are the same amongst students.

Activity

- Break students into pairs and give them one of the three following scenarios. Scenarios are following lesson.
- Have students read over each scenario carefully, paying attention to the specific costs/expenses outlined.
- Complete an estimated budget for the family based on the information provided. A sample budget chart can be found after the lesson. Have students use their own experience or best guesses.
- Have each pair report back the total of their monthly budget. Write this on the board (all Case Ones together, all Case Twos etc.).
- If different case studies were assigned have one person from each of the case scenarios read their case aloud.
- Go through some of the areas of the budget and discuss them; what was allocated, what value the students put on each of the items etc. For example:
 - Did they budget for a telephone? Is it an essential if you have kids and/or if you’re looking for work?

- Did they budget for insurance? (Many people on welfare don't pay for insurance and so are hard hit by a tragedy like a fire).
 - Non-prescription medication (Many times parents will ensure that their children have medication but will go without for themselves).
- Hand out the "Ontario Works Rates" Chart and have each pair calculate how much each family would have received on Ontario Works. Chart follows the lesson.
 - Discuss as a larger group the following questions: How do the students' results compare? Was anyone close (in most cases they are not)?
 - Ask pointed questions about some of the scenario issues.
 - Did anyone in Case One kill the dog?
 - In Case Two who gave away the cat or hamster?
 - Did the father get dentures in Case Three?
 - Go through some of the areas of the budget and discuss them; what was allocated, what value the students put on each of the items etc. For example:
 - Did they budget for a telephone? Is it an essential if you have kids and/or if you're looking for work?
 - Did they budget for insurance? (Many people on Ontario Works don't pay for insurance and so are hard hit by a tragedy like a fire).
 - Non-prescription medication (Many times parents will ensure that their children have medication but will go without for themselves).
 - Given that the majority of students will be over budget, discuss what they would take away. If they are \$500 over, for example, can they come up with \$500 in cuts?

Reinforcement/Independent work

- Have students review their own monthly budget. How do their expenses compare to what they would have available to them on social assistance? What would they choose to give up? Have them ask friends and family about this as well. What do others determine to be the priorities in their expense spending; what is necessary and what is a frill?

❖ **Assessment**

- Review and assess student budgets. Check for understanding.
- Evaluate students' ability to prepare and complete their budgets.
- Students will also be assessed on their independent work and ability to follow oral instructions. Participation in larger group discussion will also be assessed. Assess students on their abilities to actively engage in discussion and to follow classroom discussion rules.

❖ **Academic & Other Considerations**

Diversity/ Accommodations/Special Needs

- Be attentive to students who may respond to the lesson with feelings of shame or embarrassment due to personal experiences of conflict or homelessness.
- New Canadian students may not know the average costs of living in Waterloo Region. Ensure that students are paired up accordingly.

Remedial/Enrichment Activities

- If the student required additional help in understanding the concept, the student can be given a basic budgeting tool that tracks only a few items to reinforce the concept.
- Individual discussion to explore the concept further.
- For enrichment, have students prepare budgets for someone who makes minimum wage.

❖ **Additional Teaching Tools**

Teacher Reflection Questions

- Could I have used a form of technology to get the idea across in a different way?
- Were the different types of learners all equally engaged in this lesson format?
- Did everyone participate in the activity? Is there another activity I can implement to foster further understanding?
- Did I allow for enough time to discuss the topic?
- Were students fully engaged while completing the worksheets?

❖ **Reference**

- Toronto Disaster Relief Centre <http://tdrc.net/resources/public/TeachingGuide.htm>

“Making Ends Meet” - Case Studies

Case One

- Sole-support mother with one child, a boy aged 7.
- Her rent is \$800.00 per month for a two-bedroom apartment. The apartment is in an area of the city that isn't close to stores (she had little choice because this is where the lowest rents are) so she has to pay for bus fare to the store and back.
- Her heat is included but she has to pay her own hydro, which is \$55 per month.
- She attended college in the past and now has to pay back \$155 per month towards her student loans.
- The family has a dog that needs a \$350 operation. The dog has been with the family for 7 years.
- The child is expressing an interest in sports and the school has advised that he must have non-marking shoes, which cost \$55.
- The school that the boy goes to has pizza day on Friday's which costs \$2.00 each Friday.

Case Two

- Sole support father with two children, a girl age 6 and a boy age 9.
- He was attending a Computer Programming Course at college but was forced to drop out in his third year when Ontario Works was implemented and he was told that Ontario Works participants are only allowed to attend school up to grade 12. He owes \$13,000 in student loans and is required to pay back \$140 per month.
- The six year old is lactose intolerant and the 9 year old is diagnosed with a learning disability, and attends school 14 kilometres from their home.
- They have one cat and a hamster.
- The rent is \$840 per month plus heat and hydro for a two-bedroom unit.
- The father takes one night class a week for three hours and has to pay a babysitter \$4/hour for the course time plus one hour of travel time.
- He also has to perform 70 hours a month in workfare placement and is provided half the cost of a \$55.00 bus pass each month in order to get to his placement.

Case Three

- Two parent family with three children ages 7, 10 and 13. The mother was employed part time as a bank teller to supplement family income but was recently laid off due to corporate downsizing. She didn't qualify for Employment Insurance.
- The rent for a three-bedroom town house is \$1055 per month. In the winter they pay \$100 per month for heat, hydro is \$60 per month year-round. They drive an old car that costs \$30 per week to run.
- Recently, the husband was told that he needed to have dental work to remove his molars, which are abscessed, and have them replaced with dentures. He can get emergency dental coverage through Ontario Works for two teeth but only for the "relief of pain". He can get half the cost of dentures covered through special assistance at the city but he still has to find \$1200 to make up the difference.
- The husband has other health problems, severe asthma and arthritis, which exempts him from the mandatory job search that all Ontario Works recipients perform.
- The children, all boys, are interested in sports and it's a constant battle to provide them with proper footwear, as they go through running shoes at a fast rate.
- Each boy brings a lunch to school every day.

“Making Ends Meet”

Budget Chart

| Expenses for one month | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| Rent | | Cable | |
| Electricity | | Heat | |
| Telephone | | Transportation/car-bus | |
| Insurance (home/life/contents) | | Food | |
| Parking/Car maintenance | | Cleaning supplies | |
| Personal Items (hygiene/toiletries) | | Child care/babysitting | |
| Non-prescription medication | | Books | |
| Laundry | | Dry-cleaning | |
| Entertainment (movies/magazines/fast food) | | Job search requirements (newspapers/printing/stamps/env elopes) | |
| Debts/loans or credit | | Christmas/Birthday savings | |
| Household items (linens/towels/light bulbs/ kitchen equipment/furnishing) | | Clothing (summer/school/winter- snowsuit/ boots/mitts/hats) | |
| Recreation (sports/clubs/school field trips/ special events at school such as pizza days/ family events and vacations) | | Miscellaneous (haircuts/pet- food/school- supplies/Dental-work/banking charges/ emergency savings) | |

Total Per Month Costs: \$ _____

Case Example # _____

Ontario Works Rates

This table shows monthly Ontario Works rate amounts. This chart is separated into three categories. Basic needs is the amount of money that is allocated for the basic needs to live such as food, clothing, transportation, toiletries items, etc. The Shelter category shows the amount that is allocated for rent. Lastly, the Ontario Child benefit (OCB) is payable to families with dependent children only.

| OW CASE TYPE | BASIC NEEDS | SHELTER | MAXIMUM OCB | TOTAL |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Single | \$221 | \$364 | \$0 | \$585 |
| Couple | \$438 | \$572 | \$0 | \$1,010 |
| Single parent with 1 child | \$341 | \$572 | \$92 | \$1,005 |
| Single parent with 2 children | \$341 | \$620 | \$184 | \$1,145 |
| Couple with 1 child | \$438 | \$620 | \$92 | \$1,150 |



I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do.

—Helen Keller

Next Action Steps

There are many ways that your classroom can take action towards ending homelessness and promoting housing stability. Below are action ideas in Waterloo Region.

❖ **Advocate**

- Write letters to the Member of Parliament (MP) and the Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) in your area. Describe how homelessness affects you and your community and ask for long-term solutions to homelessness which include housing, income, and supports.

❖ **Donate**

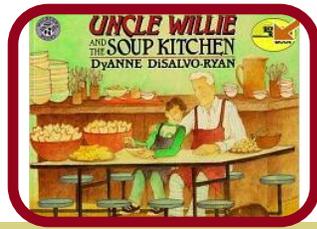
- Collect funds or supplies that are needed by local emergency shelters, drop-in centres, or outreach workers. Required supplies might include: towels; socks; hats and mitts; shampoo; hotel toiletries; toothpaste; or can openers. To find out which supplies are most in need, contact an agency working in your community.
- Organize a food drive for one of your local food banks.

❖ **Volunteer/Tour**

- Take a tour of a local agency working with individuals experiencing homelessness or individuals with low income. The agencies listed above are excellent points of contact.
- Contact local agencies to find out if there are opportunities for students to volunteer at the organization or to create something the organization could use (e.g., posters).

❖ **Inform Others**

- Organize an assembly focusing on issues of homelessness. Invite someone from an organization listed above to share local experiences of homelessness.
- Encourage students to talk about the causes of and solutions to homelessness with family and friends.



Teaching Resources

❖ Picture Books

- Fly Away Home—Eve Bunting (1993)
- December—Eve Bunting (1997)
- Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen—DyAnne Disalvo (1991)
- A Shelter in Our Car—Monica Gunning (2004)

❖ Novels

- Monkey Island—Paula Fox (1991)
- Looking for X—Deborah Ellis (1999)
- Theories of Relativity – Barbara Hawarth-Attard (2005)
- How to Steal a Dog – Barbara O’Connor (2009)
- Also Known as Harper – Ann Haywood Leal (2009)
- Finding Stinko – Michael de Guzman (2007)

❖ Music (suitable for grades 7 & 8)

- Another Day in Paradise—Phil Collins (1989)
- Moments—Emerson Drive (2007)
- Nobody’s Home – Avril Lavigne (2004)

❖ Videos

- Pursuit of Happyness (2006)
- The Saint of Fort Washington (1993)

❖ Websites for more information

- www.hhug.ca
- www.homelesshub.ca/



I don't ever want to go back to being homeless. I'd rather try to do something to prevent that happening because everybody deserves their own place to call home.

—Delilah, age 12 (*Home Free Calgary, 2008*)

Ways to Support Students Experiencing Homelessness

❖ **Common Characteristics of Children Experiencing Homelessness**

While the population of school-aged children experiencing homelessness is varied, there are some characteristics which are observed frequently in this population. Some signs of a child experiencing homelessness may include:

- Poor health, nutrition, and hygiene
- Low self-esteem
- Unwillingness to form relationships with peers and difficulty trusting people
- Short attention span
- Aggression
- *Reference:* NCHE.

<http://www.serve.org/NCHE/>

❖ **Impact of Homelessness on Children's Education**

- Frequent moves and school changes can cause gaps in knowledge and repetition of material. It can also lead to wrongful diagnoses of abilities.
- Children may be bullied and teased by their peers.
- Children may have difficulty completing homework due to crowded living conditions and a lack of necessary resources (e.g., markers).
- Emotional and behavioural issues (e.g., aggression) can be barriers to school success for children experiencing homelessness.

- *Reference:* Decter, A. (2007). *Lost in the Shuffle: The Impact of Homelessness on Children's Education in Toronto*

❖ **Strategies for Promoting School Success**

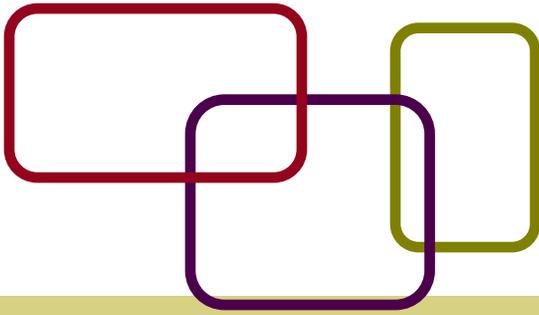
- Assess literacy immediately to ensure that instruction is at appropriate level.
- Adjust assignments to accommodate limited shelter resources and crowded living conditions.
- Plan for the next transition immediately. Create a parent folder with important documents to take to new school.
- Allow students to keep their possessions nearby and do not take away belongings as a disciplinary measure.
- Welcome all students into your classroom and create a class climate of acceptance and understanding.
- Provide a structured, predictable routine and refrain from rearranging the classroom furniture too often.
- Separate tasks into meaningful parts and don't assign too much work that takes place outside of school hours.
- *Reference:* NCHE.

<http://www.serve.org/NCHE/>

❖ **Ways to Support Parents/Guardians Experiencing Homelessness**

- Refer parents/guardians to the community resources listed on page 38.
- Communicate regularly regarding student's school performance.

- Solicit suggestions for how to best accommodate the student's living situation (e.g., materials to provide to shelter).



Parent & Guardian Fact Sheet

Dear Parent or Guardian,

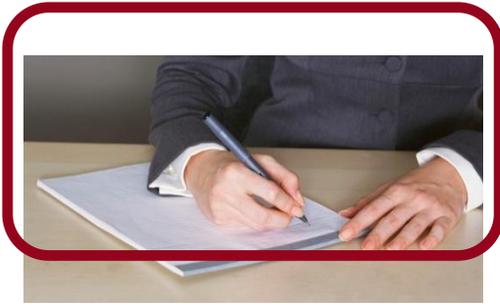
I am writing to let you know that next week our class will be discussing local issues of homelessness. I understand that for some students, this might be a new topic that brings up many questions. Your child may want to ask these questions and discuss their feelings about the topic with you. I am providing you with some fast facts about homelessness in Waterloo Region so that you might feel more prepared to discuss this issue at home.

❖ **Fast facts:**

- People don't choose to be homeless and in fact, most people want a home.
- People without adequate housing, income and support are more likely to fall into homelessness than those who have adequate housing, income and support.
- Many more people experience homelessness but do not stay in shelters. Some people experience "hidden homelessness" and live with friends or family members while they don't have a home.
- Many communities have a local emergency shelter to support individuals and families looking for a place to live.
- Providing housing with support services is roughly 10 times less expensive than the cost of emergency service provision.

If you would like any additional resources or have any questions about this topic, don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



More about the HHUG

If you are interested in learning more about the HHUG, or becoming a member, please visit the website at www.hhug.ca, email hhug@lutherwood.ca, or phone 519.743.2460 x356.

Your Feedback

We would love to hear from you!

Did you find this toolkit helpful for your classroom?

How did your students react to discussions about homelessness?

Was there anything that you felt was missing from this guide?

How can we improve the toolkit for future editions?

If you would like to provide feedback regarding this toolkit, or if you have any questions, please email hhug@lutherwood.ca or phone 519.743.2460 x356.