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Solving the Homelessness Crisis

**Introduction**

The housing problem has been a thorn in the foot for residents in the states, with the state of California being the most adversely affected, as it houses a quarter of the entire homeless population in the states. With many governors and political aspirators promising to solve such issues, there has not been a concrete solution to this issue for quite some time now, given that the population is still experiencing growth. In the year 2017, California had around a hundred and thirty-four thousand homeless people, signifying a fourteen percent increase from the previous year 2016.

Solving the housing crisis problem is indeed necessary for the citizens to enjoy the well being of their livelihood. With the population in California hitting 40 million residents, new housing units would come in handy for such kind of a steadily growing population. A study conducted by a government agency found out that 553,742 people were homeless in the states at least in one night in 2017, a statistic that shows a 0.7 percent increase from the figures in 2016. Houselessness in the states dates back to the 1870s, and during that time and context, homelessness appeared as a situation in which a person traversed the country in search of a job, and therefore the problem of lacking a place to lay one’s head was viewed to be solved by the availability of jobs. By the 1850s, lodging houses situated in police stations were the major accommodation structures in place, and the number of vagabonds was reported to be on the increase. The problem of houselessness became a national issue in 1879. The early 1980s marked the start of the modern day homelessness. This situation was fueled by high rates of joblessness, upgrading of inner cities to suit the middle class, emergence of the HIV and budget cuts in the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In particular, Ronald Reagan, in his reign cut federal funds meant for public housing by half. This public policy has proven to be disastrous, and this explains why homelessness has persisted in the States ever since. Since the 1980s, the rental value of apartments and housing units has been on the rise, while wages have been relatively stagnant.

The underlying homelessness causes include lack of affordable housing, stagnation of wages, the existing wealth gap, inadequate health and social services for people living in poverty and racism present in institutions. If the shelter continues to remain unaffordable to the masses, then homelessness will keep on recurring. The increment of rental value also over time has brought problems, since the employers are not increasing the salary of the employees and this has led to an increasing number of vagabonds, just only because once the rent goes up, a person is forced to move out to look for affordable housing that befits their income.

This paper explores in depth the housing crisis and seeks solutions on the same aimed at the betterment of Citizens’ lives. Rapid rehousing solves homelessness. A modern approach to getting people some shelter comes in handy. Rapid is relatively less costly as compared to other solutions that seek to address homelessness. Rapid re-housing is,therefore the ultimate antidote for bringing homelessness to an end.

**Background Information**

The housing problem affects the singles, the families, children, the youth and veterans. A homeless person always finds it difficult to find a source of livelihood, stay healthy and maintain relationships. In the search for a job, someone who has no shelter will not have a quiet time to look for the same position. They will only try to seek shelter, even before they can look for that job. Again, good and decent housing is dependent on the job that a person lands. The leading cause of homelessness has been the ever-widening housing affordability gap.

Further, the homeless individual will have his or her health adversely affected. AIDS and homelessness are two frequently co-occurring conditions (Culhane et al., 2001, p. 515). Those shelter users who were male, substance abusers, and diagnosed with a severe mental illness often had a co-occurring AIDS diagnosis due to risky behaviors such as sharing needles for intravenous (IV) drug use (Culhane et al., 2001). The shelter users are also observed to have up to nine times the risk of having HIV/AIDS as compared to the general population. The primary cause of HIV among the homeless is the sharing of needles in drug and substance abuse that is so rampant among the unsheltered individuals. Such people also end up having mental health issues in the long run. It also proves difficult for the homeless to maintain healthy relationships with other citizens. A homeless person is always treated with less dignity by society, only because of their destitute state. Due to the desperateness in the state of homelessness, people still turn to prostitution to find a means of livelihood, and this leads to a moral rot in the society. On the taxpayer, homelessness digs into their pocket so that the homeless can be taken care of in their state.

**Problem Definition**

Homelessness has been a problem emanating from the 1870s in the United States, and it is also a menace that affects other countries, both in the developed and in the developing world. Homelessness put merely the lack of a permanent home or place of residence. One of the significant causes of homelessness is the loss of income. An individual or family who loses a job is forced to leave their current housing facility and look for shelter elsewhere, as they can no longer be able to pay for the housing. Lack of saving always leads to homelessness, and it makes them utterly unprepared for the loss of a job. The loss of a job is a perfect example in the personal circumstances and relational problems category that causes homelessness. Other events in this category include housefires that render people houseless, domestic violence and family breakups. Relational problems may consist of family abuse, addictions, mental health problems of family health problems and extreme poverty. , and therefore they cannot be able to pay for necessities including food, healthcare, education, and housing.

Domestic violence is undeniably a cause of may people becoming shelterless. Family violence affects 237 people in a sample of 100, 000 people (Statistics Canada, 2016). Such has always lead to individuals and families leaving home all over a sudden and without proper structures in place. Women are particularly affected. Another highlighted the cause of people being homeless is system failures, which are as a result of lack of proper functioning of other systems of care and support. A perfect example of a structural factor would be the lack of adequate income to afford a house. The employer could be giving the employee money that is not sufficient to pay for the housing cost, and this results to the ever-increasing nature of rental value. Housing becomes inaccessible to the working population. It is also typical for the majority of the working people to be spending far much an amount of money on housing. Shifts in the economy also pose a threat to the population, in the sense that poor economic performance makes people not able to earn some adequate income so that they can pay for food and housing.

Shortage of housing also contributes to homelessness. Millions of families in countries like Canada spend more than half of their income on housing! Families, therefore, live in core need, and it exposes them to the risk of homelessness, as the loss of the job at any instance will render the family shelterless — this inadequacy of affordable housing across nations in the globe fans the flame of homelessness. This paper indeed seeks to offer house as the primary solution to houselessness, because the shortage of housing is quite the fundamental cause of homelessness.

**Elaboration of the Solution**

Rapid rehousing fits in as a perfect elucidation for the problem of homelessness, while still ensuring effectiveness and sustainability. Rapid rehousing is a housing program that has a transitional nature, providing up to 24 months assistance in rental houses, intensive case management, and supportive services without preconditions such as employment, income, the absence of criminal record, or sobriety with the resources and services provided being tailored to the unique needs of the household. The core components of rapid rehousing include housing identification, rent, and Move-In assistance, case management and services. Housing identification involves the recruitment of landlords to provide housing opportunities to the individuals caught up in homelessness, embracing landlord participation in addressing tenant qualifications and concern about the short-term nature of rental assistance.

The homeless individual finds and secures appropriate rental housing. The next core component is rent and move-in assistance that provides a means of covering move-in costs, deposits and the rental and utility assistance that is required to enable the homeless secure permanent housing. Finally, rapid rehousing embraces case management and the relevant services. The homeless select out from a variety of options based on their unique needs, preferences and financial resources. The issues hindering homeless folks from accessing decent housing get addressed. Such matters may include credit history, arrears, and legal issues. The homeless get assisted in negotiating manageable and appropriate lease agreements with landlords while at the same time they time-limited services and support become accessible to families so that they can settle quickly in the permanent housing. The participants’ stability in housing gets followed keenly, and the rapid rehousing agencies are available to resolve crises. The households get connected to resources that aid them to improve their safety and well-being so that they can achieve the long-term goals that they have set. The agencies also ensure that services provided are client-directed, voluntary and that they respect the clients’ right to self-determination.

The above-described solution addresses the housing problem fundamentally. The personal circumstances and relational issues include the loss of job and domestic violence. When a person has been rendered jobless, the provision of shelter will enable the person to have peace of mind so that they can search for employment, as the current state of work goes unconsidered. For the typical scenario of domestic violence, the homeless individuals can seek legal cover and compensation once they have been providing with the housing to shelter them through the rapid rehousing plan. The rapid re-housing strategy also solves system failures in that the individuals and families are given a chance to opt for a program that fits their financial resources. The legal issues are also well catered for in this kind of solution.

**Benefits of rapid rehousing**

Rapid rehousing helps households to exit homelessness quickly. Fast rehousing addresses the sorting of the problem almost immediately, and this becomes very handy in solving critical homelessness situations. For instance, if a mother has been kicked out by a husband and she has children, rapid rehousing sorts her issue by providing her with accommodation promptly. The typical period for a homeless person to exit shelter is usually an average of two months.

Further, rapid rehousing prevents households from returning to homelessness. Seventy-seven percent of families undertaking rapid rehousing did not respond to shelter. The rapid rehousing plan also raises the sufficiency of a home. The families that have involved in rapid rehousing have had incomes that are 10 percent higher than those referred to usual care. A family raises it’s economic value, as they become more reliant on themselves. Food security also improves by utilizing rapid rehousing. The quick rehousing scheme also decreases the homelessness overall. Rapid rehousing, if employed over a given period can help bring homelessness to almost a zero level.

Objections to rapid rehousing plans

Rapid re-housing has some several drawbacks that may attract criticism about its effectiveness in solving homelessness. One is that short-term always leads to short-term results. Based on the lack of necessary accountability measures, families benefiting from the program face instability and end up needing shelters or other housing assistance once the short-term resources get depleted. However, this kind of a shortcoming cannot wholly dismiss the concept of rapid rehousing completely. Rapid rehousing embraces the view that it is a means of enabling the affected individuals and families to get back on their feet after having experienced instability. Another weakness is that some of the apartment leases are not always suitable for some families. The rental value is continuously increasing, and this puts the families that are to be involved in the program in jeopardy. The Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI, 2010), some families have to look for apartments to rent with a short-term subsidy, and they end up unable to afford the flats after the period of subsidy ends. This results in further evictions and even worse rental histories than before a subsidy for the short period was received. However, the way of rapid rehousing involves the assisting of affected individuals and families in selecting apartments following their preferences and the financial resources that they can afford. Therefore, the issue of apartments being unsuitable for families becomes a non-issue. Hence the rapid rehousing plan becomes viable in an appropriate way to curb homelessness.

**Other alternative solutions**

Permanent supportive housing, as well as providing income opportunity and services. Permanent housing comes in handy to provide a shelter for the chronically homeless folks. Permanent housing embraces affordable housing assistance and voluntary support services to provide a home for them are that are homeless all the time. It further improves the health and well-being of the affected. However, this solution is way much expensive as compared to the rapid re-housing initiative, in which the former requires more capital for establishment than the latter. Providing income opportunity and services solves homelessness by addressing the financial lack that is always the cause of people not having homes. This approach aims at assisting low-income people to withstand economic crises. The problem with this approach, however, is that the homeless always find such programs to be inaccessible and the benefits that are offered by such may be inadequate to assist them to gain stability. The rapid re-housing system is a far much better approach to houselessness because it is an easily accessible program to any individual or family that is experiencing the problem.

**Conclusion**

The rapid re-housing system of solving houselessness has been chosen to be the best way to mitigate the homelessness problem as outlined in this paper. The process of implementation is relatively time-saving, effective and accessible to any person out there or group that is challenged by the housing. The method of rapid re-housing is quite straightforward, starting with house identification, rent move-in and assistance, and finally case management and services. This initiative requires an input of funds from the housing and urban development department (HUD). With a quite a considerable number of people in the States living a homeless life, the rapid rehousing program can go a long way in mitigating this particular menace. Though the mechanism does not guarantee a hundred percent solution to homelessness, it can significantly reduce the problem. It is, therefore, a system that can go along way in enabling a country to be of help to its citizens who are homeless. A homeless population will always hinder the economic development of any state and therefore making the community have a shelter goes a long way in improving a country’s economy.

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