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Deeper Issues Causing Homelessness

Nearly nine out of ten persons responding to a national PARADE poll view homelessness as a major problem throughout the United States. Regardless of race or income 70% see homeless individuals in their communities. Homelessness as defined in the dictionary refers to the state of having no home. This issue goes deeper than just not having a place to live in. Our surrounding counties like Galveston County, Brazoria County, Katy, Montgomery County, and Houston, are just a couple to mention, that have a severe problem with the number of homeless people invading the streets. In this essay I will go in depth to demonstrate that homelessness in the Houston area is caused by a pattern of mental illness, substance abuse, and the inability to obtain employment.

Mental illness, any condition that causes serious changes to the way a person thinks and behaves, places them at risk for being homeless. These individuals don’t know how to behave in a different manner. Coping with such illnesses is extremely difficult if they don’t have the necessary treatment. According to Our Daily Bread in Galveston an estimated of 120 homeless individuals had a mental illness. A grant was awarded to the Gulf Coast Centers located in Galveston, that would be utilized to benefit a large number of mentally ill homeless due to the fact that homelessness is in greater part caused by the untreated mental illnesses of these individuals. Having a mental illness affects the type of relationships a healthy person would normally have with society. Mental illnesses invade you to the point of losing care of personal hygiene. Potentially leading for that individual to have other health problems that can result in death. Mental illnesses prevent you from having a normal routine of a daily job. The idea of focusing on mental illness and coming up with a solution has been brought to the table by politicians as being more important than to provide housing assistance. Some of the most common mental illnesses suffered by homeless individuals are schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or severe depression. Sadly, because of the way society perceives these individuals and due to lack of family support, it is difficult for them to seek help from a mental institution. Along with illness, substance abusers are also in the same range for causing homelessness.

Substance abuse, being dependent of or overusing an addictive substance, is causing people to be homeless. In the Montgomery County homeless population, substance abuse is a huge problem. In the annual survey done by the Montgomery County Homeless Coalition, 66% reported suffering from a substance abuse disorder and a 72% of substance abusers reported needing treatment. For individuals to get the necessary treatment the intervention of health professionals is necessary. Sadly, homeless lack health insurance, as well as family support that can guide them to the necessary treatments. Some of the most common substances being overused by the homeless consist but can vary from alcohol, heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamines. Placing heroin as the number one abused opioid drug and followed by alcohol. Having an alcohol addiction leads to serious health complications like liver disease, some types of cancer, brain damage, and hepatitis. Those are just some of the possible consequences that homeless individuals are facing every day. If you combine homelessness and substance abuse the results are fatal for these individuals.

Employment, the condition of getting paid to perform a task, is unobtainable for someone who is homeless. To obtain an employment here in Texas there are certain requirements that you must meet. A resume is essential and work experience is in most cases crucial to get hired. You must provide basic information about yourself, for example an address and a telephone number. There are places that ask for at least three references to apply for that specific job. For someone that is homeless that is very much impossible. Homelessness and unemployment go hand in hand because you need to have a home to be able to get a job and you cannot afford a home if you don’t have a job. This is a cycle that the homeless fall into as they struggle to apply for a job. Unfortunately, even if an attempt was made, it would be very complicated for them as their chances of getting hired are very minimal. Causing unemployment to be the leading factor in the increasing extent of homelessness in the country.

Homelessness in our surrounding counties of the state of Texas is a major issue. Homelessness is a broad concept and can be viewed from many different standpoints. Proven without no doubt is that mental illness, substance abuse and lack of resources to obtain employment are all contributing factors for someone to be homeless. Homelessness is caused by individuals suffering from a mental illness or substance abuse, leading homeless people to be unemployed. We see it more and more as the numbers keep increasing, if we have unassessed addictions and untreated mental illnesses, we have a greater number of homeless in our communities. These individuals are referred to as the chronic homeless because they have experienced homelessness for at least a year, while struggling with a halting condition such as a serious mental illness or a substance abuse disorder. According to the USICH, United States Interagency Council on Homeless, just in 2020 there were 4,033 reported individuals experiencing chronic homelessness and the issue continues.

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