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ABSTRACT

This report provides an Arizona perspective on the implications and effects of homelessness on children and youth, whether they live with their families or on their own. Statistics on homeless families are provided, and issues affecting homeless families are discussed. These issues involve shelters, child care, education, and health. Issues that affect youths who are homeless and on their own are also discussed; these involve lack of services, education and health problems, physical and sexual abuse, and delinquency. Arizona's response to homeless children and youth is described in terms of the state's welfare and child welfare systems, health care system, and education and housing polices. For each of these areas, measures to improve services to the homeless are recommended. Several federal programs for the homeless are described. A recommendation to the governor to ensure coordination of federal and state policies and programs is offered. A list of 38 references is provided. (BC)

Arizona's Forgotten Children:

Promises to Keep

A Report on Homeless [illegible] Youth in [illegible]

[illegible] Action Alliance • The [illegible]

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Arizona's Forgotten Children

Promises to Keep

"If I could have anything I wanted, I wish we could have our own apartment in a nice clean building and a place that I could go outside to play in that's safe. I want that most of all."

Jennifer, age 9

A clean place to live and a safe place to play is a promise that should not be too much to keep.

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We are grateful to Anne Thompson for her editorial assistance.

Finally a special acknowledgment to Tina Romano and the Arizona Department of Economic Security, Office of Human Resources, for providing the photographs that appear throughout the publication.

FOREWORD

The Children's Action Alliance is an Arizona nonprofit organization established to do research, policy analysis, and advocacy on behalf of Arizona's children. The Alliance is supported by grants, contributions, and contracts from foundations, corporations, government and individuals. The board of directors is made up of business and community leaders who believe that the quality of life of our state's children is the single most important determinant of Arizona's future.

The Alliance's Homeless Children's Project came about through a grant from the Margaret T. Morris Foundation. The purpose of the project is to bring about greater statewide understanding of the terrible plight of Arizona's homeless children and their families and to recommend necessary action. Through the work of the Alliance's Task Force on Homeless Children and Youth and the recommendations in this report, it is our fervent hope that every child in Arizona will have a place to live which truly can be described as home, and that there is cause again for hope for these children.

I would like to personally thank the Margaret T. Morris Foundation for their confidence, the Steele Foundation for their on-going support, and members of the Homeless Children's Task Force and its chair, Barbara J. Polk, for their expertise and incredible commitment to the project. I especially thank Jane Irvine, the Alliance's Child Welfare Specialist and principle author of this report, who has demonstrated extraordinary professional insight and commitment to the cause of vulnerable children.

Carol Kamin

Carol Kamin, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Children's Action Alliance
September 1989

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface and Summary of Recommendations

Tonight 569 children in Arizona will spend the night in an emergency shelter. An additional 600 children will go to sleep in the back of a car, on the street, or under a bridge because the shelters don't have room for them.

Homelessness* among our children and youth represents the failure of our basic support systems and human services programs established to help people in need who are poor, unemployed, victims of domestic violence, unable to afford housing or food, or children who are victims of abuse. Families and children make up over one-third of the homeless population and are the fastest growing segment. Policies and programs usually focus on the problems of adults and assume that somehow the children's problems will be solved as an indirect benefit of providing services to their parents. Children who are homeless encounter major problems that warrant attention. Their lives are seriously affected by the lack of affordable housing which leaves them with no stable place to live for months at a time; poor nutrition during developmental years; significant interruptions in their education, often due to school district policies which bar homeless students from attending; inadequate social services because our child welfare system is unable to provide them on a voluntary basis and respond adequately to the needs of families and children in crisis; and a lack of access to health care.

A significant number of older homeless youth are living on their own who have become separated from their families by running away, being abandoned or thrown out, or by being discharged from the foster care, mental health, or correctional system. These young people experience serious problems obtaining medical care and access to education and services because they are minors and because there is a serious shortage and fragmentation of resources for adolescents in our state.

The plight of Arizona's homeless children has raised concern among many of Arizona's citizens and was the impetus for the Children's Action Alliance to form a Task Force on Homeless Children and Youth to search out some answers and find out what was being done by state and local officials to address this critical problem.

With the passage of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act by Congress in 1987, the federal government became an active partner in confronting the needs of the homeless. An unanticipated outcome of the McKinney Act funding, however, has been the tendency to create a separate service delivery system for homeless people. Proceeding in this direction, instead of strengthening existing programs and services and developing only those services that are actually needed, poses many pitfalls. The obvious dangers are duplication of effort and expense, but a separate system also encourages homeless children to be stigmatized. The Task Force's efforts focused on examining the existing systems of welfare, child welfare, health care, education, housing and the impact of the McKinney Act on programs and services in Arizona which were established to prevent families from becoming homeless, as well as on those systems designed to meet the emergency needs of families, children, and youth who are homeless. Our examination of the programs and services in the state results in key recommendations designed to address major problems affecting homeless children and youth.

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* Throughout the report the following definition of "homeless" as defined in the Stewart B. McKinney Act will be used:

1. one who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate residence; or
2. has a primary nighttime residence that is:
   a. a supervised shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including domestic violence shelters, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);
   b. an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized (prison inmates not included); or
   c. a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (e.g., cars, parks, the streets, abandoned buildings, desert camps)

A summary of these recommendations is included in this section. The recommendations with greater detail and explanation, are found within Chapters III and IV.

This report provides an Arizona perspective on the implications and effects of homelessness on children and youth, whether they live with their families or on their own. The problems and needs of homeless children in families are discussed in Chapter One, which is followed by a discussion of homeless youth on their own in Chapter II. Chapter III outlines recent efforts to address the homeless crisis in our state and provides specific recommendations for action by policymakers and elected officials. Chapter IV discusses the need for coordination between state and federal programs and also provides a recommendation.

A SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a summary of recommendations. A full and detailed discussion of the recommendations is included in Chapters III and IV. The recommendations address the following issues:

I The Welfare System
II The Child Welfare System and Homeless Adolescents
III The Health Care System
IV Education
V Housing
VI The Coordination of Federal and State Policies and Programs

I. THE WELFARE SYSTEM

A. Welfare Reform

The recommendations outlined in the Governor's Task Force on Welfare Reform (January 1989) which call for increases in the benefit level from 39 percent to no less than 50 percent of the poverty level, establishment of an AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) -- Unemployed Parent Program, and many other support services, should be implemented by the Department of Economic Security (DES) and the state legislature. We strongly recommend that benefit levels for AFDC ultimately be raised to 100 percent of the federal poverty level and that a full unemployed parent program be put into place in an effort to adequately address the problems.

Rationale

Arizona's public assistance levels rate 36th in the country, which give the state a grade of D from the federal government. A family of three cannot exist on $293 per month, especially when housing costs are nearly double that amount. The consequences of neglecting our less fortunate citizens, many of them children, during times of crisis, may be a very expensive proposition in the long run when we think of them as the next generation who will make up our workforce and community leaders. Arizona is one of several states that does not have an unemployed parent AFDC program (AFDC-UP). This means that if a two parent family with children living in Arizona remains intact but does not have any source of income, the family is not eligible for AFDC benefits. This policy frequently forces the family to choose between remaining together and being denied assistance for the children, or splitting up so that part of the family will be eligible for benefits. Young parents just entering the job market are among the first laid off of work because of lack of seniority. Continuing to deny AFDC benefits to families with an unemployed parent is devastating to children who watch as their parents are forced to separate in order to provide for them. Almost any program or service that reduces poverty or assists the poor will, at the same time, reduce the likelihood that people will become homeless.

The returns on welfare reform investments include improved quality of life for children and families, decreased dependency on welfare for recipients served under employment programs, increase of federal funding for Arizona, and additional state income taxes paid by those who can become self-sufficient.

B. Federal Funding Opportunities Should Be Maximized For Emergency Assistance

Arizona's Department of Economic Security should apply for and implement the federal government's AFDC-Emergency Assistance and Special Needs Programs.

Rationale

Arizona should join the 30 states already using these funds that match state expenditures at a 50 percent rate to help not only homeless families but also those on the brink of homelessness.

C. Employment Programs Need To Be Accessible

The Arizona Department of Economic Security should restructure existing programs such as the Job Training Partnership Act Programs to make them more accessible for those homeless and potentially homeless people who need job training and employment opportunities.

Rationale

As 40 percent of Arizona's homeless population are employable individuals and families, employment and training services must be made accessible. When people have lost their homes they no longer have telephones, mailboxes, work wardrobes, and child care etc. Programs must have outreach components and offer a variety of well-coordinated resources, such as emergency and transitional housing, child care, and health care.

II. THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM AND HOMELESS ADOLESCENTS

A. DES Must Accept Responsibility And Serve Homeless Adolescents

Older homeless youth need to be someone's responsibility and the only state agency having statutory mandated responsibility is DES. The growing practice of screening out homeless adolescents because of shrinking resources must be stopped and appropriate services for adolescents established and funded.

Rationale

Even though abandoned and dependent children are the statutory responsibility of the Department of Economic Security's Child Protective Services, the department, through the development of a prioritization practice, has determined that older homeless youth who have no parents that want them are low priority. In some areas of the state, some reports are not even being accepted. Runaway shelters cannot keep these youths on a long-term basis for CPS because these adolescents need guardians and long term planning.

B. Programs And Policies Which Address The Needs Of Older Homeless Youth Must Be Established

Homeless youth on their own should be recognized as a serious problem and state funds should be appropriated for an interagency pilot effort to supplement and increase the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act funding for Arizona which is currently set at $340,000. Funds are needed to expand voluntary services for youth such as shelter programs, independent living skills training, medical care, and to ensure access to support services such as education, job training, employment, medical care, and mental health services.

Rationale

The rising population of homeless youth on their own should be formally recognized as a serious problem and services funded and expanded to meet their needs. These youth are in critical need of help and assured protection and services under current state statutes, but a significant number are not being served.

C. Comprehensive Child Welfare Services Should Be Available

Comprehensive child welfare services should be available to families on a voluntary basis as well as those protective services determined by law to be mandatory. Such voluntary services would include case management; parent skills training; child care; counseling; assistance in finding housing, employment and benefits; home-based services; foster care; independent living; and adoption services.

Rationale

The demand for services in cases of reported abuse and neglect has severely taxed even the most competent child welfare staffs and agencies across the country. Escalating reports of abuse, neglect, and family violence, and the intensified needs of the children involved in the system have boosted the number of children entering foster care. In Arizona there are currently 3,000 children in foster care. Because of shrinking resources, Child Protective Services primarily provides services to only those children who are in life threatening situations. Early intervention and voluntary services are disappearing in many communities, and many families must wait until situations become far too serious before they qualify for agency help. The majority of the funding must go toward services for families receiving Child Protective Services. Appropriate intervention in the early stages of child abuse cases can be cost effective and allow many children to remain with their families. By delaying intervention or failing to provide accessible voluntary services for families, these problems will only be postponed and become more serious which in turn will be more expensive in treatment costs and care. Most important, however, are the emotional and physical costs to the children.

III. THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

A. Health Care Needs To Be Accessible

Regulations governing AHCCCS (Arizona Health Cost Care Containment System, Arizona's alternative to Medicaid) need to be changed to allow clients to change plans or utilize other doctors and plans if their residence changes.

Rationale

At the present time AHCCCS does not allow a reciprocal arrangement among plans for clients since these assignments can only be made once a year. When a family becomes homeless they are often unable to get to their assigned doctor, and another facility may be easier to get to. Flexibility would ensure that more children get care sooner and prevent trips to the emergency room.

B. Homeless Youth On Their Own Must Have Access To Health Care

Action must be taken by the Arizona Department of Health Services and the legislature to provide health care to homeless youth on their own, especially pregnant and parenting teenagers.

Rationale

Older homeless youth are significantly at risk for serious health problems because of their circumstances. Providing accessible health care in the early stages of health problems and conditions would result in improved health and the prevention of permanent physical disabilities for these youth, and their children as well. Costly dollars for emergency room visits in situations where illness or injury has been neglected or untreated could be saved.

C. Preventative Health Care For Children Is Essential And Must Be Provided

Preventative health programs for children and youth should be supported on the state and federal level, such as WIC (the Women, Infants, and Children's federal nutrition program for pregnant women and mothers of young children), early health screening, family planning, and immunization programs.

Rationale

Preventative health care investments in children have proven to be worthwhile both in terms of improving the health of our children and in maximizing tax dollars.

IV EDUCATION

A. The Department Of Education Should Establish Model Guidelines For Admitting Homeless Children To Schools

The Department of Education (DOE) should develop policies, regulations and financial incentives, as appropriate, to encourage school districts to admit homeless children to schools in those instances in which the children actually reside in the district, where such admission would be in the best interests of the children. These policies, regulations and financial incentives should ensure access to schools by older homeless youth on their own who, for whatever reason, are not living with their parents or legal guardian and would bring Arizona into compliance with the Stewart B. McKinney Act. The Department of Education should then require school boards to adopt the criteria as a condition for eligibility for discretionary state funding, including funds that are not tied to the homeless issue.

Rationale

There is no question that school boards have the authority to adopt such policies (ARS 15-823 [A]). This proposal would not strip that authority or unlawfully turn it over to theDepartment of Education, but, rather, would simply allow DOE to use financial incentives to encourage school districts to adopt uniform policies in the best interests of Arizona's school children. This device has long been used by federal authorities to encourage states to adopt uniform policies in cases where the federal authorities either have not had the power, or have not had the political will, to mandate the uniform policy directly. Carrying out the intent of the Stewart B. McKinney Act also makes good sense and will be to the benefit of children.

In view of the present concern over Arizona's educational system, and the dropout rate of over 40 percent, it is important to do everything possible to ensure that students finish high school. The gaps in education that homeless children experience will undoubtedly hurt them later on, but many schools seem to have responded passively to the homeless crisis, hoping it will go away or viewing homelessness as only a temporary condition. Many of these children are without a home for months at a time, but their education can't afford to wait. Schools must reach out to the children and develop ways of working with different populations such as the homeless, pregnant teenagers, youth on their own, and others.

B. Schools Should Receive Discretionary Funds To Serve Homeless Children And Youth With Special Circumstances

The State Department of Education should provide financial incentives from federal and state funds to facilitate the development and expansion of school based programs, such as the program model in Apache Junction. This program pools funds from several sources and enables children who are at-risk

of or victims of homelessness to remain in school by providing counseling, free meals, access to social services, bathing facilities, clothing, food assistance and other services as needed. Adoption of the Model Admissions Criteria by school boards needs to be a condition of eligibility for discretionary state funding (See Previous Education recommendation).

Rationale

Early investments in education, especially for children who are "at-risk" are important in increasing performance and reducing the dropout rate. Homeless children cannot afford to experience gaps in their education. The school system must adapt to their needs.

C. The Minimum Age For School Attendance Should Be Changed From Eight To Five

The State Department of Education, supported by other child advocacy organizations, should sponsor legislation which would amend ARS-15-802 and lower the minimum age requirement for school attendance from eight to five.

Rationale

In the past there was less concern about when children started school. Forty-six states now require school attendance younger than age 8. In recent years we have learned that the early years are critical in the formation of young minds and academic skills. Children who are at the highest risk of academic failure are most likely to be those children who were not sent to school until after the age of five. Sometimes they are kept home to help care for younger children, or because their parents have too many problems to be concerned about schooling, or they are homeless. These are the very children who desperately need to begin school at age five.

V. HOUSING

A. Arizona Needs A State Housing Authority

Through legislation, a state housing authority should be established which would increase quality, low-cost housing; have responsibility for the Housing Trust Fund; and develop a low-income housing policy for Arizona.

Rationale

The creation of a housing authority to ensure the coordination and development of low-income housing programs (on the state level) has been identified by more than one community task force in the state as important (The Task Force on Homeless, Single Parent Families of Tucson, The Affordable Housing Committee of the Community Council, the Coalition for the Homeless, as well as the Children's Action Alliance Task Force on Homeless Children and Youth). With federal dollars decreasing, the state government needs to ensure that Arizona is receiving the maximum benefits of HUD dollars and that permanent housing programs are well integrated with emergency shelter and transitional housing programs being developed and funded with the McKinney Act funds.

VI. THE COORDINATION OF FEDERAL AND STATE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

A. Federal And State Funds For The Homeless Must Be Coordinated

The Governor should immediately designate an Office for Services to the Homeless by executive order to ensure that homeless Arizonans are a state priority, ensure compliance with the McKinney Act, maximize the potential of federal and private funding to the state, provide state-level policy direction, and promote joint efforts by state agencies to address problems.

Rationale

Because of the lack of coordination of efforts and focused attention, Arizona is missing out on federal and private dollars which could be utilized to help families and children, as well as older youth on their own who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Strengthening and coordinating efforts would eliminate duplication and make services more accessible to homeless Arizonans who need them. Creation of a Homeless Services Office at the executive level would enable the Governor to give this problem the attention and priority it should have and direct and focus the state agencies that provide services to begin addressing the short-and long-range solutions to the problems. The office should advocate for services for the homeless with the Arizona congressional delegation and bring together any emergency response programs with preventive and longer range services.

CHAPTER I

Homeless Families—The Fastest Growing Segment of the Homeless Population

When people talk harshly about the poor, when they say "Why can't they be like me? We worked hard and made it," I wonder if they realize they're talking about children?

—Jonathan Kozol in Rachel and Her Children, Homeless Families in America (New York: Crown, 1988).

An old station wagon parked in a dusty lot is home to four-year-old Joshua, his parents, eight-year-old sister Elisha, and the baby, three-month-old Daniella. Life has not always been this gloomy for Joshua, whose face shows signs of stress and concern over the family crisis.

Until he was laid off a month ago, Joshua's father worked as a maintenance man, making $5.79 an hour. His mother also worked as an electronics assembler earning $130 per week but when Daniella, the baby, was born, the family couldn't afford the $152 a week for child care. Without Joshua's mother's salary the family could no longer afford their house. They were evicted.

Joshua's parents are soured on life in shelters, as a brief stay resulted in the children contracting head lice. All they want are jobs so they can earn enough money to have a home for their family.

Joshua's family, in just a couple of months, dropped from relative stability to just about as close to the bottom of the barrel as you can get. But they remain hopeful, determined to stay together, determined to reshape their lives.

Throughout the country, families are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population. The number of homeless families will continue to grow unless the problems that are forcing more and more families out of their homes are addressed. By the year 2000, if current trends continue, millions of American children will have spent at least a part of their childhoods without a home. Throughout their lives, these youngsters will bear the physical, educational, and emotional scars that result from a childhood filled with cold, hunger, sporadic schooling, and frequent moves among shelters.

It is generally thought that members of homeless families with children make up about one-third of the homeless population, with the estimated number ranging from 250,000 to 3 million (Mihaly, 1989). Every night, according to a 1988 estimate by the Institute of Medicine, 100,000 American children go to sleep homeless (Institute of Medicine, 1988).

There is a broad consensus that the numbers of homeless families are growing and that children may be the fastest growing group of homeless. Cities surveyed by the U.S. Conference of Mayors have had greater increases in requests for shelter by families than by individuals for the past several years. For example, in 1987, cities reported an average 32 percent increase in shelter requests by families, compared with 21 percent by individuals; in 1988, requests by individuals rose 13 percent while family requests for shelter rose 22 percent (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 1987).

HOW MANY HOMELESS FAMILIES DOES ARIZONA HAVE?

Determining the number of homeless children and families is a difficult task. People close to the homeless problem indicate that the official estimate of 3,490 for members of homeless families with children in Arizona, used by the Department of Economic Security for the 1989 Comprehensive Homeless

HOMELESS FAMILY INDEX (U.S.)

- According to the National Academy of Sciences, an estimated 100,000 children are homeless each night.
- The average Age of Homeless Children is 6.
- 43% of homeless children don't attend school.
- The number of Homeless families in the United States will rise by 25% this year.
- Eviction and spiraling rents displace 2.5 million people from their homes each year.
- 750,000 new low income housing units are needed each year to house the homeless.
- 13.8 million children are living in poverty.
- 15% of American Children are born into poverty.

HOMELESS FAMILY INDEX (ARIZONA)

- According to a Department of Education survey 1,110 children go to sleep homeless every night in Arizona.
- According to a Maricopa County Health Department report only 4% of the school age homeless children were attending school.
- The population of homeless families for Arizona is at least 7,000.
- At the present rate of increase the number of Homeless families in Arizona will rise 8,400 by next year.
- Of all the residents of Maricopa County who were poor, 44% were children.
- 184 children were placed in Casa de los Ninos (A Tucson Crisis Nursery) in 1988 because their parents were homeless and could not secure shelter for the children.
- In 1985 there were 57,968 families in Maricopa County alone eligible for public assisted housing which consisted of 9,454 units. This represents an unmet need of 86%.
- During state fiscal year 1987-1988 6,380 women and children who were victims of domestic violence were sheltered in Arizona. During the same year, 7,341 women and children were turned away from shelters due to the lack of available bed space.
- Arizona has only 235 beds available in domestic violence shelters.

Assistance Plan, underestimates the current magnitude of the homeless problem in the state. Mary Orton, Executive Director of the Central Arizona Sl. .lter Services, estimates families and children account for over 3,000 of the people who are homeless in the Phoenix area alone. A 1988 survey of all types of shelter providers, including domestic violence, completed by the Arizona Department of Education, estimated that over 1,100 children are homeless in Arizona on any given night. Since shelter space is limited, the majority do not have a bed to sleep in and sleep outside or in cars (Arizona Department of Education, 1989).

WHO ARE THE HOMELESS FAMILIES?

Families who are homeless are a diverse group. They include unemployed or low-income couples who lack sufficient financial resources to afford housing, mothers leaving relationships that are frequently abusive, mothers on AFDC (welfare) who are unable to make ends meet, mothers who were homeless in their teens and who have a history of poverty and often substance abuse, and some single fathers with children.

The available literature, which is based primarily on studies of sheltered families, suggests that most homeless families consist of women on their own (mostly single) with their young children, usually under the age of five.

Families tend to be long-time residents of the community when compared with single adults without children. Approximately half of the families surveyed by the Maricopa County Health Department information system who were using services had resided in Maricopa county for over 3 years, and two-thirds of them had lived in the county at least a year.

The increasing reports of family violence are tied closely to the growing number of homeless families and children who are forced to flee their homes. An estimated 1.8 million women and children are victims of family violence in their own homes each year. Approximately 54 percent of them are children, of whom 40 percent have also been abused. Children are emotionally victimized by domestic violence even if they are not themselves physically beaten. Today many of these vulnerable children and their families are being helped in a piecemeal fashion, or not at all. Arizona has only 235 beds in domestic violence shelters for women and children, and last year had to turn away over 5,000 women and children due to lack of space.

THE HIDDEN HOMELESS FAMILIES

As most estimates of the number of homeless families are based on those who are using services, they represent only a portion of individuals who are homeless. Missing in the numbers are the "Hidden Homeless Families." Louisa Stark, President of the National Coalition for the Homeless and Social Anthropology Professor at Arizona State University, has said that the homeless exist in all communities.

"In the suburbs look in the back of supermarkets at night, and you'll find families who don't want to stay in a crowded shelter in the downtown area living in cars" (Arizona Republic December 1988).

Virtually nothing is known about homeless families who survive living in vacant buildings, in cars, or temporarily "doubled up" with friends or relatives. Most of the families that come to shelters have come from the homes of friends or families. The number of families eligible for but who are not receiving assisted housing suggests a substantial number of th· hidden and near homeless. When numbers of homeless families are cited as a basis for discussions about the problems they face and the services they need, families who are among the "hidden homeless" must also be counted and considered.

ISSUES AFFECTING HOMELESS FAMILIES

A variety of events can push fragile families over the edge and cause them to be homeless. These families have usually lived only a

paycheck away from disaster for several years. The individual reasons for homelessness include eviction, family breakup, domestic violence, illness, victimization by crime, substance abuse, unemployment, and disaster.

Not everyone agrees on the causes for the rise in family homelessness but people who work in the field agree that a major cause is the lack of affordable housing. Other causes often mentioned are inadequate public assistance benefits and the shortage of decent paying jobs. Arizona has been particularly affected by the increase in the numbers of poor families. Compounding the problem is that welfare benefits (AFDC) provided to families and children are among the lowest in the country. A mother and two children receives a maximum of$293 per month, which is 38 percent of the 1987 federal poverty level. In comparison, the HUD fair market rent (the cost of a modest two bedroom apartment) in Phoenix is $545 per month. Following are some issues that seriously impact homeless families.

Emergency Shelters

After being laid off and losing her apartment, Susan called a family shelter in Phoenix asking for a place for herself and her five children ranging from six months to 15 years old. The shelter was full, as were any others where they could stay together. Susan's only option was the large congregate shelter located downtown, miles from their Mesa community. Shelter policies would not allow the two older boys, who were 13 and 15, to stay as boys are only permitted to sleep in the family dorm with their mothers if they are under eight years old. They were too young to stay alone in the men's dorm. Desperate, Susan placed the three youngest children at the Crisis Nursery, and she and her two sons slept in the car for a month until she could find a job and get a place to live.

Phoenix Lighthouse Ministries is the largest family shelter facility in the state. The center has 100 emergency shelter beds for families as well as a facility for 10 single men. In 1988, 800 men, women, and children were served by the Lighthouse but 10 to 15 families a day were turned away due to lack of space. A few local churches and private agencies have created "pocket shelters" which have created space for additional single men and families. Pocket shelters routinely turn away families for lack of money and space. According to the Comprehensive Homeless Assistance State Plan, Arizona has approximately 500 beds and 60 family units designated for emergency shelter for a homeless family population of approximately 7,500 including 235 beds in domestic violence shelters for women and children. The existing services are only able to provide services to about 10 percent of the families that need help. Some additional relief is provided in the form of motel vouchers that provide housing for a few days at a time but is often unavailable due to lack of funds.

Emergency shelters for homeless families with children are often dangerous places for children. Privacy is usually lacking when families are housed barracks-style with dozens of other families, as well as hundreds of single adults. Children living in these places are exposed to the dangers of drugs and crime. Shelters and hotels rarely have a place where children may play either inside or outdoors. Cooking and refrigeration facilities are often lacking, so families must be bused or walk to soup kitchens to eat meals. Many children's nutritional needs suffer or can't be met in this type of a chaotic environment.

Shelters Often Separate Families

Shelter rules and restrictions can also result in children becoming separated from their families. When family shelters are not available, families are forced to separate in order to receive shelter, and younger children may be placed in foster care. In other shelters, adolescent males may not be allowed to stay with their mothers. Some children, particularly those who are older, go to the streets and try to make it on their own.

The Need For Child Care

The daily routine in many shelters makes finding a job or a home almost impossible. Families often are required to leave the shelter early in the morning (6:30 is common) and not allowed to return until after dinner. They often eat and sleep in different locations without any place to stay during the day. Some shelters provide child care for their residents but this is usually the exception rather than the rule. Without child care the parents must take their children everywhere with them.

In September 1988 the Caregivers Child Care Center was opened at the Central Arizona Shelter to care for children while their parents looked for jobs, housing, or applied for benefits. The center was funded through private donations, largely from Xerox employees. The United Methodist Outreach Ministries Children's Shelter located in downtown Phoenix provides up to three weeks of child care for homeless children whose parents are staying in a shelter. This allows parents to seek work or housing while providing for the developmental needs of the children. In 1987, 361 children were served but 60 families were turned away. Clearly there are not enough of these short-term child care programs to meet the demand.

Some Homeless Children End Up In Foster Care

The children of homeless families are at high risk of entering the foster care system. A parent may choose to place children in foster care temporarily, believing that the children will be better off until the parent gets back on his or her feet. The crisis nurseries in Arizona estimate that 40 percent of the children who are voluntarily placed are there because their parents are homeless.

Children may also be removed from families because of abuse or neglect sometimes resulting from the stress of being unable to provide a home. In New Jersey, 18 percent of the children in foster care in 1986 were there because their families could not find a place to live (Fagan, 1987). The Arizona Department of Economic Security Child Protective Services (DES) does not have information about the number of children in foster care whose parents are homeless but estimated in 1989 that this was probably the case for at least 100 children.

Regardless of the circumstances of a child entering foster care, regaining custody may be extremely difficult, even when there is no longer any risk of abuse or neglect, when the parents are homeless. One of the overlooked outcomes of a decision by Child Protective Services to place a child in foster care, regardless of the reason, is the loss of public assistance benefits which are tied to children being in the home. The loss of such benefits as AFDC, Food Stamps, AHCCCS, and public housing may cause the family to become homeless, making it virtually impossible ever to regain custody of the children.

Permanent Damage To Children

While uncertainty surrounds the numbers and causes of homelessness, no one disputes the devastating effect it has on the victims. Two out of five homeless children miss long periods of school. Studies show developmental delays, depression, hostility, behavior problems and more health problems than in other children. Johnathan Kozol, author of Rachel and Her Children, cites an abnormally high incidence of low birth weight, early death, and stunted cognitive development among

homeless children. No one can measure the scars these children bear. The experience of losing their home causes children to lose their toys, pets, and much of their clothing. The greatest loss, however, is the security and warmth of a stable home.

Dr. Ellen Bassuk, a Boston psychiatrist who has studied homeless children, has described their erratic and irrational behavior. One boy pulled out three of his teeth because, as he put it, he was worried. A 19-month-old boy had nightmares and stopped eating. Depression, bed-wetting and violent mood swings are common (Bassuk, 1987).

While some experts believe that children coming into the shelters already have serious problems, a Harvard University study looked at the effects of shelter living on the kids. Dr. Lenore Rubin, one of the authors of the Harvard Study, testified before Congress about the problems children experience in the shelter environment, such as stress caused by repeated disruptions and overcrowding. More than half of the children in the Harvard study were depressed (Bassuk, Rubin 1986).

Motor development, especially in small children, suffers as well. Many families live for months out of an automobile, eating in soup kitchens, using public facilities for toilets and bathing, and spending long hours cramped in the vehicle. Under those conditions children have little chance to run, jump, and exercise. Toddlers who have learned to walk often go back to crawling. Since development in children occurs best at the normal age and only more slowly or not at all at other ages, arrested development stunts these children for life (Bassuk, Rubin 1987).

Education

A study by the National Coalition for the Homeless concluded that 43 percent of homeless children were not going to school. The large gaps in the education of these children will undoubtedly leave permanent scars. Bassuk found that 43 percent of the homeless children studied had failed a grade, 24 percent were in special classes, and nearly half were currently failing or performing below average work in school. The problems of these especially vulnerable students have become apparent as homelessness continues to claim an increasing number of children as its victims (National Coalition for the Homeless, 1988).

Significant obstacles confront homeless children as they try to continue their schooling. Even if they have been attending school regularly before they become homeless, they are frequently unable to continue at the same school, since shelters or temporary housing is rarely in the same area. Until laws were recently changed, homeless children were often refused enrollment in the schools because they did not have a permanent address; even with the change in the law some school personnel in Arizona are resistant to enroll homeless students. Requirements for birth certificates, immunization records, and proof of residency and guardianship are often barriers students cannot overcome.

Even when children are enrolled, they face additional barriers to attendance. Going to the old school may require long trips on the bus and shelters frequently lack quiet places to study and do homework. Many homeless children are ridiculed by their classmates who discover that they have no homes. Cruelty by other children discourages some parents from continuing to send their children to school, and teachers who work with homeless children indicate that it takes special efforts to reach out to these children and keep them in school.

Health

Homeless children are at greater risk for experiencing health problems (Institute of Medicine, 1988). They are particularly susceptible to illnesses that result from exposure or unsanitary conditions such as intestinal viruses, upper respiratory disorders, lice, impetigo, and ear infections.

The frequency of health problems among homeless children— including delayed immunizations, elevated blood lead levels, the rate of

admission to hospitals and the rate of child abuse and neglect reports—exceed those of children who are not homeless. These health problems are further complicated by the lack of access to medical care, absence of the resources or an environment to comply with treatment, and generally unsanitary living conditions. Studies show rather decisively that the key factor in the ill health of the homeless is homelessness itself (Wright, 1989).

Soup kitchens and shelters experience difficulty in providing nutritious meals and snacks for children from a variety of age groups. Children who have special nutritional needs or who are underweight or overweight cannot follow a diet. Poor nutrition is a serious problem for these families, and mothers find it particularly difficult to care for infants without refrigerators and facilities to sterilize bottles for formula. Recurring health problems, even if they are not severe, will disrupt school attendance and performance and cause developmental delays.

Medical care to homeless children is provided in Arizona either through private insurance, AHCCCS (The Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System), county health departments, specialized programs such as the Homeless Health Clinic in Phoenix or free health care available in child crisis nurseries and shelters. Unlike the traditional Medicaid model which pays a fee for services provided, AHCCCS pays a monthly per capita amount to health plans that are responsible for meeting the medical needs of those enrolled. To qualify for these indigent health care programs one must complete a lengthy application process and only use doctors which have been assigned. Difficulties arise for families enrolled in AHCCCS when they become homeless, as they do not have the flexibility to change from one medical plan to another based on where they are living. Due to agency regulations some homeless children and their families have been turned away by the Homeless Health Care Clinic in Phoenix when they had been assigned to another plan that prohibited them from using the clinic's services, even though they were homeless and staying in the shelter next door.

Chapter II

Homeless Youth on Their Own

Shannon was 17 years old and the mother of a nine-month-old infant. She came to Arizona from an eastern state with her 18-year-old boyfriend and a second teenage couple. They had been living out of a car for three months and Shannon was the only one of the four who was employed. She had a part-time job in a fast food restaurant.

Shannon sought help after becoming discouraged when she was seven months pregnant. She came to the Tumbleweed Young Adult Program, which has the only long-term transition program for homeless youth on their own in the state. Her parents were contacted to obtain permission for her to remain in the program. Unfortunately, they confirmed Shannon's claim that they did not care what she did.

After a number of months in the program Shannon completed her goals of a GED, a job, and a place to live. She also participated in parenting training and independent living skills. Her oldest child thrived and her new baby was born strong and healthy. She temporarily reconciled with her boyfriend but when he continued to refuse to look for work or assist with the children she kicked him out.

Shannon was lucky Tumbleweed was an option for her as this program is the only transitional facility for homeless youth in the state. The program can only accommodate 6 young people at a time and must turn hundreds away.

Recent concern about homeless children has focused primarily on children who are part of homeless families. However, substantial numbers of homeless youth like Shannon are also living on their own. Nationwide, the number of homeless youth on their own is estimated at 4 percent of the homeless population, with cities reporting that this group is increasing (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 1988). Despite their young age, very little information is available about these youth. Statistically, they have been categorized and "lumped in" with data on other runaway youth who may have homes to which they can return.

In the past a variety of terms have been used to refer to the population of young people who are displaced, including homeless, runaways, throwaways, push-outs, system kids, street kids, unaccompanied youth, etc. The terms "runaway" and "homeless" have distinctive meanings as currently used by service providers. The National Network of Runaway and Youth Services (1985) differentiates between these categories as follows:

1. Runaways are children and youth who are away from home at least overnight without parental or caretaker permission.

2. Homeless are youth who have no parental, substitute foster, or institutional home. Often, these youth have left, or been urged to leave, with the full knowledge or approval of legal guardians and have no alternative home.

3. Street kids are long-term runaway or homeless youth who have become adept at fending for themselves "on the street," usually involved in illegal activities.

This section will focus on youth who are truly homeless, including those "throwaway" youth who are forced out of their families. The distinctions between runaway and homeless youth are not always clear. Many homeless

youth often have histories of being runaways, and many runaway youth are just a step away from being homeless.

WHO ARE THE HOMELESS YOUTH?

From what is reported we know that homeless youth living on their own who use the runaway shelter programs tend to be White, 15 or 16 years old and more likely to be female than male (USDHHS, 1984). Young people become homeless for many reasons but they tend to remain homeless due to the lack of resources for adolescents.

Frequently, they come from dysfunctional and abusive families. Evidence suggests that the majority of these homeless youth have histories of being physically or sexually abused (Bucy, 1988). Other problems include conflict with family members, parental alcoholism or drug abuse, and conflicts over sexual orientation for homosexual youth.

Youth leaving foster care, psychiatric hospitals, residential treatment centers, or juvenile correctional facilities are at risk of becoming homeless if proper discharge planning, and preparation for independent living including follow-up is not provided. A Hollywood, California sample of 93 homeless youth reported high rates of prior placement in system care; 41 percent had been in foster care, 38 percent had been in group homes, and 56 percent had been in juvenile detention. One-third of these youth reported that they had become homeless after separation from their most recent placement or detention (Robertson, Koegel, Mundy, et al., 1988).

THE NUMBERS: WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

The number of homeless youth on their own is relatively unknown. Most of the information about this group comes from school personnel or police who provide services on a case-by-case basis. Research indicates that adolescents on their own are often reluctant to seek out help for a variety of reasons, including distrust, fear, and a negative previous experience with a service agency.

Arizona Department of Economic Security reports indicate that from October 1986 to September 1987 43,964 youth were served by runaway youth shelter programs. This figure encompasses all youth who utilize shelters, from runaways to youth placed by Child Protective Services and Juvenile Courts (which account for the largest share) to homeless youth on their own. Seventy-eight percent of the youth who came to the shelters had been living with their parents during the previous year but only 49 percent had a plan to return home. Alternative placements were the outcome for half the youth and ranged from foster care to placement with a relative. Of the total population of youth served in FY 1986/87, 4,268 or 10 percent were determined to be homeless youth on their own. Differences were apparent among programs and cities. Twenty-five percent of the youth served by Open Inn in Tucson were "throwaway kids" or did not have parents who wanted them to return home. These figures represent only a small portion of the youth who need help. No one knows how many do not seek out shelter or are turned away because of lack of space.

Many homeless youth are making it on their own in a marginal existence living under bridges or in cars and without the help of any programs or services.

ISSUES AFFECTING HOMELESS YOUTH ON THEIR OWN

The Lack of Services

Homeless adolescents on their own face many barriers to receiving appropriate services. Older adolescents in particular may fall between the cracks as they are outside the jurisdiction of programs designed to serve children, but they do not yet have the rights of adults. In Arizona, as in most states, the age of majority is 18. Arizona laws do not provide for emancipation of minors. Young people must wait until they are at least 18 to make

contracts in their own name, obtain medical treatment without parental consent, apply for Arizona's medical assistance program, AHCCCS, vote, or sign a lease. For the most part these youth are not eligible to receive public assistance, are excluded from shelters serving families or single adults, denied medical and ongoing mental health services, and have difficulty getting into school.

Historically the child welfare system (DES Child Protective Services) in our state has assumed responsibility for abandoned or dependent children, regardless of their age. But as budgets have dwindled and the number of child abuse reports has escalated, a growing number of adolescents in our state are no longer being served by this system. By internal policy, their cases are considered a low priority. forcing many teens to fend for themselves or to depend on the assistance of individuals willing to help out.

Adolescents are often reluctant to seek out help from social service agencies and afraid to represent their true situation for fear of reprisal or punishment. Programs specifically designed to serve teenagers are extremely limited. Most crisis shelters are designed to reunite runaways with their families and have limitations on how long adolescents can stay, and few transitional living programs are available to help young people live independently or secure alternative living arrangements. There are less than 25 shelter beds in the state targeted for what is an estimated number of 4,300 homeless youth on their own. Ann Young, a high school counselor in Tucson, has estimated that over 200 students in her high school are homeless. They are staying with friends, relatives, or alone. These teenagers have experienced serious problems at home and often do not have parents who really care about their welfare, but they are determined to finish school. Young's first response was to report these situations to DES Child Protective Services in hopes of receiving services for these students. However, DES declined to intervene in most of these cases, so Ann Young, frustrated at the inaction of the bureaucracy, recruited volunteer families and set up her own program to help the students. In the Spring semester of 1989 Young had placed 25 students in volunteer families and sought private donations to provide these families with a $100 per month stipend, but there are always more children than homes. A Tucson physician donates medical care, and Young personally sees that they stay in school. The kids at Young's school are fortunate, but what about schools where there is no Ann Young?

While the causes of youth homelessness vary, the primary reason these teenagers remain homeless is the lack of services and resources for them. Services that serve adolescents in our state are fragmented among several state and county agencies, each one responsible for addressing one type of problem but not the multiple problems and needs of many of these adolescents. Most of these homeless youth cannot be pigeonholed into a mental health program, runaway shelter, Child Protective Services, Juvenile Justice System, or Health Care category without access to an integrated service delivery system which can draw from a variety of services. Existing agencies and programs are full beyond their capacity. As this trend continues, without planning and direction, more youth will continue to go unserved.

Education Problems

The school experience of these adolescents mirrors the disturbance in their families. Many have histories of poor adjustment to school, including patterns of inconsistent attendance and low achievement. Others, depending upon their past experiences are successful in their academic work and are often described by counselors as "good kids." Some youth encounter barriers to school attendance because local school district residency decisions are often arbitrary. It is not uncommon for adolescents to move in with other relatives or friends if they are not getting along with a parent or stepparent. Many times they do not even have a choice because they have been kicked out. Although Arizona law does now provide an

exception and allows children to live with relatives and attend school in the district, other youth living with friends or on their own outside of their parents' school district sometimes are denied admission in their district of residence. Many of these teenagers simply fall through the cracks and end up dropping out of school. In 1987, 88,600 (14 percent) of Arizona teenagers dropped out of school (Arizona Department of Education, 1988). The existence of an accessible appeal process that is made known to those who are denied enrollment could help avert one of the problems causing adolescents to leave school.

The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act was intended to address the school attendance problems faced by homeless children. Most states, however, have been slow to implement the Act's education provisions, according to Shelley Jackson, staff attorney at the Center for Law and Education. The Act requires participating states to write a state plan that ensures that local school districts enroll homeless children in either the district in which their temporary shelter is located or the district where the family was living before they became homeless, whichever is in the child's best interest. The U.S. Department of Education has allowed states to delay submitting the plans until they have applied for the second round of McKinney Act funds in April 1989.

Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Homeless youth on their own frequently experience higher rates of mental health problems than adolescents in the general population. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the population of youth on the street is becoming younger and more disturbed. Researchers report that homeless youth experience high rates of depression and are likely to have a history of suicide attempts. For many teenagers emotional problems are at the root of their difficulty in school and a contributing factor to their leaving home or being kicked out (Robertson, 1989).

Youth who are homeless are also at greater risk for a number of other health problems, including substance abuse, pregnancy, AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, and physical and sexual abuse. High rates of substance abuse have been reported among homeless youth.

Health Problems

Little is known about the health status and health care needs of homeless adolescents, but many of the problems they experience are similar to those experienced by homeless children in families. Common problems include inadequate diets resulting in poor nutrition, poor personal hygiene, and lowered resistance to disease.

Although most homeless youth are sexually active, few report consistent use of contraceptives (Robertson, Koegel, Mundy, et al., 1989). They are at a greater risk of pregnancy and AIDS. High rates of pregnancy have been reported for girls. Homeless and runaway youth participate in street prostitution at relatively high rates. Nearly 30 percent of homeless youth surveyed by Robertson (1989) reported that they engaged in prostitution, and they were more likely to engage in prostitution during periods of homelessness than when they had a place to live. Because they are more frequently involved in sexual activity (including both homosexual and heterosexual prostitution) and intravenous drug use, homeless adolescents are at higher risk for AIDS (Bucy, 1988). Health care is extremely difficult for homeless youth. Since they have to be 18 years of age to be treated without parental consent, most wait until the problem, illness, or pregnancy is chronic before seeking treatment in an emergency room. Even in the emergency room it is possible that their illness will not be treated since they do not have a parent or guardian to give treatment consent.

Abuse and Crime

A large number of homeless youth are subjected to physical and/or sexual abuse before becoming homeless. In a sample of 75

homeless teenagers surveyed in San Francisco, more than 60 percent reported that they had been sexually abused before leaving home (Herman 1988). Sexual and physical abuse continues to be a fact of life for many youth living on the street. Robertson (1989) found that 42 percent of homeless adolescents reported being victims of assault, and 13 percent reported sexual assault in the past year.

Crime, Delinquency, and Status Offenses

Paul was placed on probation at age 14 for stealing bread and bologna for himself and his two younger brothers to eat. His brothers were temporarily removed from the home by Child Protective Services but were returned when their mother obtained employment. Paul was placed in a residential program as officials felt supervision was lacking in the home.

Paul's parents left the state soon thereafter because they were accused of check fraud. Paul was left behind without any hope of being reunited with his family because of the criminal charges against them. He had difficulty living in the residential center and ran away on several occasions. Consequently, he was committed to the Department of Corrections at 16 where he remained until his 18th birthday.

Status offenses—offenses that would not be crimes if committed by adults—have been fairly well defined in most state juvenile codes. A typical list of status offenses would include truancy, running away, curfew violations, and incorrigibility. Chronic status offenders are often involved in a variety of survival crimes such as shoplifting, prostitution, and panhandling. Not all chronic status offenders are street youth. But street youth are a highly visible subgroup within the chronic status offender population and thus possess the characteristics that many chronic status offenders have in common.

Street youth, as the term suggests, are kids who live on the streets—literally. For a variety of reasons, they either refuse to live at home any longer or have no home to return to. While many street youth can be reunited with their families successfully, many of them have families that are so destructive or disorganized that returning home is not realistic. Because the court sees them primarily as runaways, they are often categorized as chronic status offenders, though they generally have committed survival crimes as well as status offenses. They are "chronic" offenders because they have run away either from home, from a foster home, or from some form of court-ordered placement several times. Sometimes court officials are tempted to give up on these adolescents and let them continue to live on the streets. Other communities, ones with runaway programs like Turning Point, Open Inn, and Our Town are struggling to find ways to reach these young people before the dangers of street life make it too late.

Other Problems

In addition to physical and mental health problems, homeless youth often lack basic independent living skills such as money management, cooking, apartment hunting, etc. and require educational and vocational training. Most have poor histories of school adjustment and have dropped out. They often don't have basic skills, are marginally literate, and virtually unemployable. Once kids have dropped out of school they can usually get only low paying minimum wage jobs which typically do not come with health insurance or provide enough income to enable them to rent an apartment on their own.

Chapter III

Arizona's Response to Homeless Children and Youth

A. THE ARIZONA WELFARE SYSTEM

Homelessness is the most visible manifestation of the nation's housing and income problems. The fastest growing portion of the homeless population is also the traditional client population of welfare departments, families with children. Arizona's welfare programs are administered by the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES).

In order to understand how the welfare system responds to housing and homelessness, this section examines the traditional welfare programs largely supported by federal funds and emergency assistance and special needs monies which can be used in conjunction with AFDC benefits to help families in trouble.

The only national program that exists to meet the cash assistance needs of families with dependent children is the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program (Title IV-A of the Social Security Act). AFDC is financed by the federal and state government, usually at a 50 percent match rate as an entitlement. In 1987, the lack of a fixed current address was officially declared not to be a bar to eligibility determination.

AFDC benefit levels vary from state to state, with a low of $118 per month for a family of three in Alabama to a high of $749 in Alaska. In Arizona the maximum a family of three can receive is $293. The simple fact that the HUD determined fair market rent (the average cost for a modest two bedroom apartment) in Phoenix is $554 per shows that benefits are inadequate.

WHO ARE THE POOR?

In 1986 there were 32.4 million poor persons in the United States:
- 22.2 million were white
- 9.0 million were black
- 5.1 million were Hispanic of any race

12.3 million were related children younger than eighteen:
- 7.7 million were white
- 4.0 million were black
- 2.4 million were Hispanic of any race

431,000 were children younger than eighteen unrelated to the household head:
- 334,000 were white
- 84,000 were black
- 53,000 were Hispanic of any race

5.5 million were heads of poor households containing children:
- 3.6 million were white
- 1.7 million were black
- 948,000 were Hispanic of any race

Among the 5.5 million heads of poor households with children, 188,000 were themselves children younger than eighteen. (A Children's Defense Budget, 1989)

The same AFDC grant that is insufficient to meet housing costs is also insufficient to meet any of the other basic needs of a poor family. In no state do AFDC benefits even approach the federal poverty level, but the situation is particularly bad in Arizona, where the benefits make our state rank 36th in the nation. Poor families do without clothing and food and play a month-to-month game with utility companies to avoid eviction.

Federal Welfare Reform

On October 13, 1988, President Reagan signed the Family Support Act of 1988. The Act is considered the most comprehensive reform of the nation's welfare system in over 50 years. The major provisions of the act include:

- o Increased Child support enforcement.
- o Twelve months of continued child care and health care for individuals who give up AFDC benefits as a result of employment.
- o Job opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program (JOBS) for long-term welfare recipients.
- o Guaranteed availability of child care assistance to JOBS program participants and AFDC recipients who need child care assistance to work.
- o Implementation of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children Unemployed Parent Program (AFDCUP), effective 10/1/90.

Governor's Task Force On Welfare Reform

In September 1988, Governor Mofford appointed a 35-member Task Force on Welfare Reform. The Task Force submitted its final report, A Family Investment Strategy for Low-Income Families In Arizona, to the Governor on January 31, 1989.

The Task Force recommended $58.2 million in additional state funds be appropriated for state fiscal years 1989-1990 and 1990-1991 to implement the 47 recommendations contained in the report highlights which include:

- o Increasing the AFDC payment standard from 39% to no less than 50 percent of the poverty level by state fiscal year 1991-1992.
- o Implementing a time limited AFDC-Unemployed Parent Program in Arizona by October 1, 1990.
- o Implementing the JOBS program on October 1, 1989.
- o Appropriating additional state funds to restructure Child Support Enforcement.
- o Continuing with the state's existing policy which allows minor parents to establish their own separate households and claim AFDC.
- o Establishing dropout prevention and adult literacy programs.

The result, however, of the 1989 legislative session was a welfare reform bill slashed from $38.3 million down to $1.6 million for improved child support enforcement (S 1138). The deleted provisions would have increased welfare benefits, expanded job training, provided day care for working welfare recipients, and financed a dropout-prevention program (Arizona Capitol Times, June 21, 1989).

AFDC—Special Needs

In order to compensate for the inadequacy and inflexibility of the basic economic assistance package provided by the AFDC program, 33 states (but not Arizona) include in their state plans certain designated "special needs": items for which other federal monies are available with the state providing a 50 percent match. The special needs program is designed to meet unique circumstances that may or may not reoccur. Special needs are determined on a

case-by-case basis and include allowances for such items as training, child care, special diets, and so forth. Some states cover shelter items, including allowances for utility deposits, and in at least three states, special needs dollars are used to pay shelter costs in hotels or motels for homeless families.

AFDC—Emergency Assistance

The Emergency Assistance (EA) program, authorized under Title IV-A of the Social Security Act, was established in 1967 to help families with children meet emergency needs. Thirty state welfare agencies (excluding Arizona) used EA funds in 1988 to supplement AFDC with the kinds of immediate short-term assistance that Arizona has never applied for. Furthermore, certain families may be helped even if not eligible for AFDC. EA funds are available and used for many purposes, including housing, and the costs of temporary shelter. States can also provide money under the EA program to prevent homelessness by preventing eviction or paying back rent or outstanding utility bills to forestall the loss of a family residence.

Some Conclusions

Basic welfare benefits are clearly not adequate to meet the escalating housing costs in the open market and to meet the other living costs of poor families with children. Even in the case of public housing, the AFDC grant is inadequate since public housing authorities have to steadily reduce the number of slots available to welfare recipients in order to pay their own operating costs. The widespread use of emergency and special needs monies by other states (not Arizona) to augment AFDC payments not only underscores the seriousness of the problem but indicates a good use of the funds by the states. Such a response however, deals only with the immediate crises and not the long term problem.

The welfare system and public housing programs are rarely well coordinated entities. Because of a lack of formal coordination, the staff usually operate in their own arenas and speak different languages while families carry the burden for negotiating both systems.

THE WELFARE SYSTEM

Recommendations

1. ***The recommendations outlined in the Governor'sTask Force on Welfare Reform (January 1989), which call for increases in the benefit level from 39 percent to no less than 50 percent of the poverty level, establishment of an AFDC-Unemployed Parent Program, and many other support services should be implemented by the Department of Economic Security and the state. We strongly recommend that DES and the legislature adopt the goal of raising the benefit levels for AFDC to 100 percent of the federal poverty level and implement a full unemployed parent program.***

Rationale

Arizona's public assistance levels rate 36th in the country, which gives the state a grade of D from the federal government. A family of 3 cannot exist on $293 per month, especially when housing costs are nearly double that amount. The consequences of neglecting the poor, many of them children, may be a very expensive proposition in the long run when we think of them as the next generation who will make up our work force and community leaders.

Arizona is one of several states that does not have an unemployed parent AFDC program (AFDC-UP). This means that if a two parent family with children living in Arizona remains intact but does not have any source of income, the family is not eligible for AFDC benefits. This policy frequently forces the family to choose between remaining together and be denied assistance for their children or splitting up so that part of the family will be

eligible for benefits. Young parents just entering the job market are among the first laid off of work because of lack of seniority. Continuing to deny AFDC benefits to families with an unemployed parent is devastating to children to watch as their parents are forced to split up in order to provide for the children. Almost any program or service that reduces poverty or assist the poor will, at the same time, reduce the likelihood that people will become homeless. There will be a return on the investment because there will be improved quality of life for children and families, decreased dependency on welfare for recipients served under employment programs, increase of federal funding for Arizona, and additional state income taxes paid by those who can become self-sufficient.

2. ***The Arizona Department of Economic Security should apply for and implement the federal government's AFDC-Emergency Assistance and Special Needs Programs.***

Rationale

Arizona should join the 30 states that have utilized these funds which match state expenditures at a 50 percent rate to help not only homeless families but also those on the brink of homelessness. This is one preventative measure which would be the least costly for both the state and the individual.

3. ***The Arizona Department of Economic Security should restructure existing programs such as the Job Training Partnership Act Programs to make them more accessible for homeless and potentially homeless people.***

Rationale

As 40 percent of Arizona's homeless population are employable individuals and families, employment and training services must be made accessible. When people have lost their homes they no longer have telephones, mailboxes, work wardrobes, and child care. Programs must have outreach components and offer a variety of well coordinated resources, including emergency and transitional housing, child care, and health care.

B. THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

Andrea, along with her six children, sought help from a shelter for battered women to escape a husband who had physically abused her and sexually abused the children. Soon after her arrival at the shelter a report about the six children who had been sexually abused was made to Child Protective Services. No action was taken. After several weeks Andrea, unable to afford a house for her large family moved her children in with friends and secured a temporary safe place for herself. After repeated threats and break-ins by her violent husband she returned to the shelter with her children. This time Child Protective Services was called and the children were placed in foster homes. After Andrea's husband held her at gunpoint in a food stamp office, he was arrested and put in jail. The children remain in foster care as Andrea struggles in a job training program hoping to find a job which will help her secure a home for her children. Neither Andrea nor her children have received counseling or services from Child Protective Services to help them be reunited as a family. When Andrea tries to visit her children, the caseworker responds with many excuses and barriers. Andrea has seen her children twice in six months. It is now Andrea who must prove she is a good mother.

This section will emphasize the interplay of current child welfare issues and homelessness in our state. In order to address this topic, a brief overview of child welfare services is provided, which discusses the effects of child welfare services system on children who receive services as well as on those who are not served.

The Law

The child welfare system consists of the publicly administered services designed to serve children and families who are at risk of or who are victims of abuse and neglect. In Arizona these programs and services are outlined in statute (ARS 8-546) under the definition of "Protective Services" and are the responsibility of the Department of Economic Security.

The Law Reads

> *"Protective services" means a program of identifiable and specialized child welfare which seeks to prevent dependency, abuse and exploitation of children by reaching out with social services to stabilize family life, and to preserve the family unit by focusing on families where unresolved problems have produced visible signs of dependency or abuse and the home situation presents actual and potential hazards to the physical or emotional well-being of children. The program shall seek to strengthen parental ability to provide good child care.*

The law has been operationalized into the services more commonly known as child abuse and neglect investigations, home-based services, foster care, and adoption.

Child Abuse Reports

Last year 32,200 reports of abuse and neglect were received by DES Child Protective Services. The reporting of suspected incidents of abuse and neglect triggers an investigation process which examines the facts and level of risk for the child and determines if agency intervention is necessary. According to DES they only investigate 1,450 cases per month (The Mesa Tribune, 5/20/89). At this rate almost half (or 14,800) of reports were determined to be invalid, inappropriate, or not able to be investigated due to the lack of staff.

At the same time that the numbers of child abuse reports have increased, funding for Child Protective Services and the broader child welfare system has lagged behind, leaving staff, foster parents, and children without the resources and services needed to do the job of protecting and caring for Arizona's children who have no one else.

In 1984 the department developed a policy that set priorities for the investigation of reports of alleged abuse, neglect, dependency, or exploitation and is published in an internal document entitled "CPS Prioritization of ACTION." Cases are assigned a priority ranging from 1 through 4 with the response time for a case classified as a Priority 1 requiring an investigation to begin within two hours and a Priority 4 case being set at no later than one week. Although initially intended to serve as a time frame for investigations, it has resulted in a mechanism to screen out cases. "Children who have reached their 12th birthday whose parents or guardians are unable, unwilling, or so dysfunctional that they do not assume responsibility to protect the child from physical or emotional harm, or provide the child with the necessities of life, and whose situation meets the legal requirements of dependency, but there are no recent, specific allegations of abuse or neglect" are known by DES as "20's" and assigned a Priority 4. These youth encompass many homeless children on their own. The lack of resources (especially for adolescents) and staff shortages in intake have resulted in hundreds of these cases being screened out, leaving homeless youth with a delayed response or none at all.

Homeless Youth

Older adolescents who have run away or fled from problem family situations or who have been abandoned by their families are frequently turned away by Child Protective Services. This is despite DES statistics which indicate that they investigate 85 percent of the reports that they determine to be appropriate for investigation. Practice has been somewhat inconsistent, since these young people are more likely to be served in the rural areas of the state where there are smaller caseloads. Many of these children have also been abused but unless the abuse is recent, Child Protective Services has refused to investigate. Older adolescents have consistently fallen through the cracks because of policy decisions, underfunding, and a lack of resources.

While agencies and members of the community are sympathetic to the demands on Child Protective Services, the screening out of cases, especially adolescents, continues to create animosity and frustration between the community and CPS. Schools, runaway shelters, and juvenile courts find themselves increasingly frustrated with the delayed or lack of response in many of these cases despite the legal mandate to serve these children.

Some attempts are being made to help these youth by volunteers and school counselors but they continue to struggle with legal barriers posed by the state such as liability, inability to provide medical care for the children, and the financial burdens of providing for their support.

Homeless Youth Are Labeled and Pigeonholed

Homeless youth who are not served by Child Protective Services often encounter systems such as the court, corrections, or mental health. These youth often enter these systems inappropriately, become pigeonholed, and have difficulty turning themselves around. Youth who are homeless, or who do not have stable living situations, are more likely to be arrested and sent to residential treatment or the Department of Corrections by judges attempting to provide services to these "offenders." The danger of the correctional system is the exposure of youth to the whole range of criminal behavior.

Local Successes

Tumbleweed's Young Adult Program in Phoenix, a largely privately funded service, (except for the youth who are placed and funded by state agencies) is the only program in the state that provides supervised apartment living for older adolescents who have been released from corrections facilities or long-term foster care, or who are homeless and in need of training in independent living skills. The goal of the program is to provide educational and vocational training, employment, life planning, personal survival skills, and knowledge of community resources. Each year the Young Adult Program at Tumbleweed serves about 50 teenagers in need of services and last year received 476 calls from community youth requesting help.

Open Inn operates a number of programs for runaway and homeless youth in Tucson, Prescott, and Sierra Vista with a combination of public and private dollars. Sometime during the summer of 1989 Open Inn will open a much-needed transition facility in Tucson for homeless youth, supported by a HUD lease awarded under the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Act. In Prescott, Turning Point provides services to youth in Yavapai County and has demonstrated exemplary leadership in coordinating and providing community and outreach services to youth. The Prescott network of youth services, including Child Protective Services, has managed to remain more responsive than their respective counterparts in the urban counties.

"Our Town" in Tucson is a street outreach program begun in 1989 to serve Tucson's homeless youth. The focus of the program is to connect these young people with medical, food, and clothing services. The goal is to help

youth access necessary services that will enable them to get off the street—either back home or to a safe alternative. The outreach program was funded by Ronald McDonald Children's Charities of Tucson, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the United Way of Tucson.

Legislation to Help Homeless Families

Legislation (HB 2620) sponsored by the Children's Action Alliance was passed by the 1989 Arizona State Legislature and will enable the Arizona Department of Economic Security to provide rent assistance to families whose children are in foster care and where the lack of housing is the sole barrier to family reunification. HB 2620 will provide rent assistance for up to six months at a maximum amount of $300 per month. The program will reduce the length of time children spend in foster care and save dollars otherwise spent on foster care at the same time. Parents such as "Andrea," described in the case study at the beginning of this section, should benefit from this program. If Andrea were to be able to secure housing with the $300 subsidy for six months, she would be able to be reunited with her children and the state would save at least $3,900 per month by not having to pay the cost of foster care for six children.

THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

Recommendations

1. ***Older homeless youth need to be someone's responsibility, and the only state agency having statutory mandated responsibility is DES. The growing practice of screening out homeless adolescents because of shrinking resources must be stopped and appropriate services for adolescents established and funded.***

Rationale

Even though abandoned and dependent children are the statutory responsibility of the Department of Economic Security's Child Protective Services Program, the department, through the development of a prioritization practice has determined that older homeless youth who have no parents that want them are low priority and do not always receive any attention by the Department. In some areas of the state, some reports are not even being accepted. Runaway shelters cannot keep these youth on a long-term basis for CPS because these adolescents need guardians and long term planning.

2. ***Homeless youth on their own should be recognized as a serious problem, and state funds should be appropriated to an inter-agency pilot effort that would supplement federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act funding for Arizona which is currently set at $340,000. Funding is needed to expand such voluntary services for youth as shelter programs, independent living skills training, medical care, and to ensure access to support services such as education, job training, employment, medical care, and mental health services.***

Rationale

The rising population of homeless youth on their own should be formally recognized as a serious problem and services funded and expanded to meet their needs. These youth are in critical need of help and assured protection and services under current state statutes, but a significant number are not being served.

3. ***Comprehensive child welfare services should be available to families on a voluntary basis as well as those protective services determined by law to be mandatory. Such voluntary services would include case management, parent skills training, child care,***

counseling, assistance in finding housing, employment and benefits, home-based services, foster care, independent living, and adoption services.

Rationale

The demand for services in cases of reported abuse and neglect has taxed severely even the most competent child welfare staffs and agencies across the country. Escalating reports of abuse, neglect, and family violence, and the intensified needs of the children involved in the system, have boosted the number of children entering foster care. In Arizona there are currently 3,000 children in the foster care system. Because of the shrinking resources the children and families that do come to the attention of Child Protective Services tend to have the most serious problems that require more intensive services. And since early intervention in many cases is not available, many families are forced to wait until situations become far more serious and thus require more lengthy and more expensive treatment. Voluntary services for families and children are disappearing in the community as the majority of the funding must go toward services for families receiving Child Protective Services. Appropriate intervention in the early stages of child abuse cases can be cost effective and allow many children to remain with their families. By delaying intervention or failing to provide accessible voluntary services for families these problems will only be postponed and grow more serious which in turn will be more expensive in treatment and care costs. Most important, however, are the emotional and physical costs to the children.

C. ARIZONA'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

The life chances of homeless children are obviously not bright to begin with. They are saddled, first, with the well-documented burdens of poverty, and beyond that with the unique burdens of not having a safe, stable place to live. The effects of homelessness on school performance and intellectual development are also now well-known. We are learning that many are already afflicted with chronic physical disorders that may later interfere with labor force participation or even prevent them from working altogether.

Health problems also result in developmental delays which affect the child's life well into adulthood. Homeless children below the 5th percentile in height and weight measurements are common. These delays result in learning disorders, language and motor delays, and often contribute to poor school performance.

Clinics for the Homeless

The Maricopa County Homeless Health Clinic, located in conjunction with the Central Arizona Shelter services program in downtown Phoenix, began as a part of the Johnson-Pew Foundation Grant Project. In December 1984, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Pew Memorial Trust, in conjunction with the United States Conference of Mayors, gave grants totaling $25 million to establish Health Care for the Homeless Programs in 19 major U.S. cities. The program provided seed money to get community-based health care for the homeless projects up and running, with the expectation that each project would secure continuation funding from various federal, state, and local sources once program grants expired. The health care components of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act were modeled on this experience and ensure that all of the 19 projects will survive beyond the Johnson-Pew grant program.

A second local effort to provide health care to homeless children and, at the same time, collect valuable information was initiated by Dr. Phyllis Primas of the ASU College of Nursing. A Homeless Children & Youth Task Force member, Dr. Primas has designed and implemented a public health outreach project for diagnosis and assessment of homeless preschool aged children. The ASU project sent public health nursing graduate student nurses

into the Salt river bottom and campgrounds to set up makeshift clinics which offer health care and conduct assessments on children who might not otherwise receive medical attention or dental care.

For each child in the ASU sample, an assessment was made of developmental status, immunization history, health problems and hospitalizations, height and weight, hemoglobin levels, skin conditions, and other health indicators. The documentation of the health needs of these homeless children will be utilized as a basis for developing needed service programs and research on many aspects of the relationship between health and homelessness. Findings from this study are expected in the fall of 1989 and will be available from Dr. Primas.

Research on the health of homeless children is particularly significant as there is no source of data on the health care problems and health service needs of these children in Arizona. The database established by the Maricopa County Health Department to track homeless individuals who receive services will undoubtedly provide valuable information on the health needs of children and youth, especially since this agency can then compare the health status of homeless children with children in the general population. An additional benefit of the client tracking system is the medical history established for children served through the county health program.

THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Recommendations

1. ***AHCCCS (Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System) Regulations need to be changed to allow clients to change plans or utilize other doctors and plans if their residence changes.***

Rationale

At the present time AHCCCS does not allow a reciprocal arrangement among plans for clients since these assignments can only be made once a year. When a family becomes homeless they are often unable to get to their assigned doctor, and another facility may be easier to get to. Flexibility would ensure that more children get care sooner and prevent trips to the emergency room.

2. ***Action must be taken by the Arizona Department of Health Services and the legislature to provide health care to homeless youth on their own, especially pregnant and parenting teenagers.***

Rationale

Older homeless youth are significantly at risk for serious health problems because of their circumstances. Providing accessible health care in the early stages would result in improved health and the prevention of permanent physical disabilities for these youth. Costly dollars for emergency room visits in situations where illness or injury has been neglected or untreated could be saved.

3. ***Preventative health programs for children and youth should be supported on the state and federal level through such services as WIC (A federally funded nutrition program for pregnant women and mothers of young children), early health screening, and immunization programs.***

Rationale

Preventative investments in children have proven to be worthwhile both in terms of improving the health of our children and in maximizing tax dollars.

D. EDUCATION

Byron came to Turning Point, a shelter for runaway and homeless youth in Prescott, when he was 17 years old. He had lived with his mother and stepfather until his mother was no longer able to care for him due to a chronic disability and she had to be moved to a nursing home. His stepfather disappeared. Byron had been placed in Turning Point by the county juvenile detention center when he had been arrested for shoplifting. Up until then he had been attending high school in Yavapai County and was a junior. When efforts were made to enroll Byron in his former school while the agencies looked for a foster home, he was denied admission because his mother no longer resided within the school district boundaries, and a foster home had not yet been found in the area. Byron did not go to school for six months.

Legislative History

Congress responded to advocacy on behalf of homeless persons, including homeless school-aged children, through the July 1987 passage of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. This legislation established many programs to aid homeless persons in fiscal years (FY) 1987 and 1988 and included a section designed to ensure equal access to education for homeless children.

The McKinney Act's education provisions reflect two basic Congressional policies, (1) that all homeless children have the same right to a free, appropriate public education as that given to nonhomeless students, and (2) that states review, and, if necessary, revise their school residency laws in order to preclude their use as a tool to bar homeless children from school (Pub. L. 100-7, 42 USC 11301-11472). In addition the Act seeks to establish a uniform standard for determining where homeless children will attend school: State plans must ensure that local school districts enroll these students based on the "best interest of the child" rather than on administrative convenience or cost. Local districts must also provide homeless students with education services and ensure the timely availability of school records if they move between districts (P.L. 100-7, 42 USC-11432).

The Arizona Department of Education

The Arizona Department of Education is the state agency responsible for implementation of the education provisions of the McKinney Act. The department received a $50,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education to develop a state plan to ensure that the Arizona educational system is in compliance with the McKinney Act.

Barriers to the education of homeless children which were reported by Arizona school districts in a 1988 Department of Education survey included transiency, performance below grade level, and low self-esteem. Difficulties reported by the shelter providers in enrolling children in school included transiency, admission requirements, and transportation (Arizona Department of Education, 1989).

Problems homeless Arizona children have encountered include these examples:

- o A district claims that a homeless family staying in the district is not legally residing in the district but are legal residents of their original district.
- o A district requires birth certificate and/or immunization records prior to enrollment, while other districts allow students a 30-day period to produce the documents or in some cases help parents obtain them from old schools, etc.

- A district's transportation system does not extend to the area where homeless families are staying.

- The child is enrolled prior to receiving immunizations but is unable to receive shots because of lack of money or transportation and is expelled.

- The child or youth no longer lives in the same district as their parents or guardian.

- The child is unable to provide a street address or proof of residence, or district will not accept shelter or campground as an address.

- Homeless children who have been enrolled but dropped for nonattendance are denied re-admission because of previous disruptive behavior.

- A sixteen-year-old girl has stayed behind with friends to finish high school as her mother, a prostitute, has moved to California without her. She is told that she cannot enroll in school because she does not live with a relative, and her parent lives out of state and is, therefore, not a resident.

Some Answers

A recent phenomenon in response to the needs of homeless children has been the development of self-contained schools within shelters such as the "Schoolhouse" at the Central Arizona Shelter in Phoenix and the schools at Open Inn and Casa De Los Ninos Crisis Nursery in Tucson. Shelter schools attempt to meet the immediate short-term needs of students in a classroom setting at the shelter site. Students of all ages usually receive individualized instruction from the teacher, and social and recreational activities are included in the program. The shelter schools have not received public funds and have been dependent upon the private sector for their support.

Opinions on shelter schools are mixed among educators and advocates. A strong point of controversy revolves around the reasons for the development of shelter schools. These schools have been set up because the larger public education system has been unable or unwilling to respond to the needs of homeless children. Opponents of shelter schools question why the public education system is not assisted or pressured to meet the educational needs of these children instead of scraping together private dollars to create a separate system of education which is tenuous and not always accredited or part of the larger educational system. Also, many feel that children need to maintain some degree of normalcy in their lives such as playing with other children, to take them out of the usually depressing shelter environment.

Proponents of the shelter schools feel that due to the short duration of their stay these children need the individualized attention they can receive in the protected environment of the shelter school where they do not have to deal with the administrative red tape in the enrollment process, transportation problems, or the social stigma often encountered in the public school setting.

The Arizona Department of Education has developed a state plan to address the issues of Arizona's compliance with the educational provisions of the Stewart B. McKinney Act. The state plan supports the philosophy that homeless children should be integrated into neighborhood public schools whenever possible, and "that shelter schools should be utilized only until it is clear the public schools are prepared to meet the educational needs of the homeless child" (AZ. Department of Education, 1989).

To date there have not been any official policy directives issued by the Department of Education regarding admission requirements. The provisions of the McKinney Act have been distributed to schools but it is too early to determine what changes have been made.

The state statutes outlining the residency requirements (ARS 15-824) being used by some districts to deny admission to students who are homeless and do not reside with their parents, a legal guardian, or relatives may be in violation of the McKinney Act, the state constitutional right to a free public education, state and federal equal protection guarantees. This practice by school districts can be especially damaging to older youths who may be trying to finish school on their own, or who may be living with friends outside the school district where their parents reside.

Local Successes

A few public schools have developed innovative approaches to the unique needs of homeless children while mainstreaming them into the schools. When the U.S. Forest Service closed a camping area last year where homeless families had been living, they were scattered across the Superstition Mountains and nearby desert areas, posing a challenge for the school district. The Apache Junction Unified School District responded by busing in students from the tent community known as First Water and surrounding areas.

The Apache Junction School District, under the direction of Dr. William Wright, has developed a model approach to assist homeless children. This includes several outreach programs to reach homeless and at-risk children such as expanded breakfast and lunch programs and a Home/School Visitor program to provide individualized services to children and their families to help them stay in school. Cooperative projects with local social service and mental health programs as well as donations and community support are also an integral part of the programs. The Apache Junction approach attempts to provide the children with food, clothing, showers, and link the family with social services in order to remove the barriers which prevent them from attending school.

EDUCATION

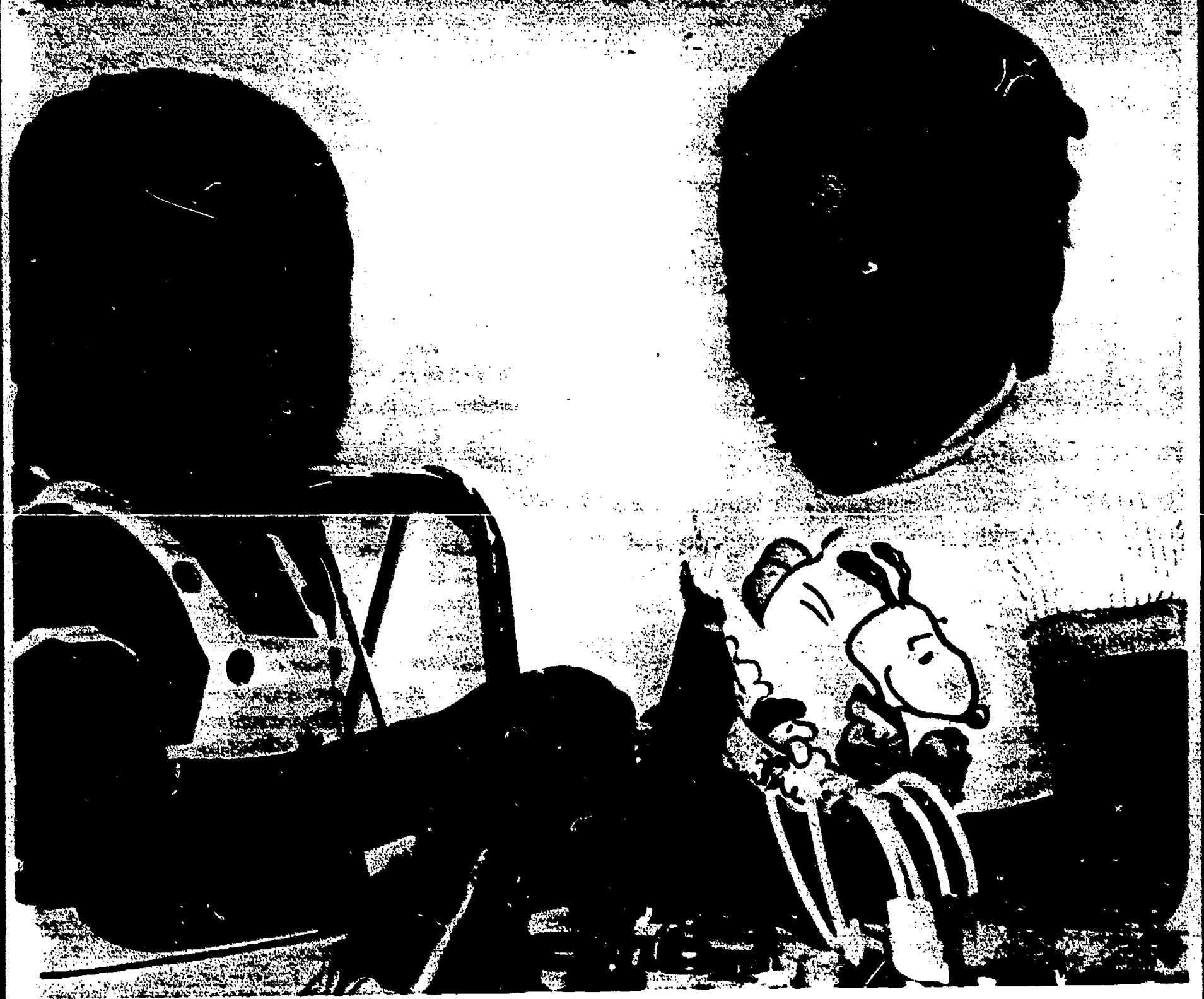
Recommendations

1. ***The Department of Education should develop policies and regulations and financial incentives, as appropriate, to encourage school districts to admit homeless children to schools in those instances when they actually reside in the district, where such admission would be in the best interests of the children. These policies, regulations and financial incentives should ensure access to schools by older homeless youth on their own who for whatever reason are not living with their parents or legal guardian and would bring Arizona into compliance with the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. The Department of Education should then require school boards to adopt the criteria as a condition for eligibility for discretionary state funding, including funds that are not tied to the homeless issue.***

Rationale

There is no question that school boards have the authority to adopt suggested model guidelines and policies (ARS 15-823 [A]). This proposal would not strip that authority or unlawfully turn it over to the Department of Education, but, rather, would simply allow DOE to use financial incentives to encourage school districts to adopt uniform policies in the best interests of Arizona's schoolchildren. This device has long been used by federal authorities to encourage states to adopt uniform policies when the federal authorities either have not had the power, or have not had the political will, to mandate the uniform policy directly. Carrying out the intent of the Stewart B. McKinney Act also makes good sense and will be to the benefit of children.

In view of the present concern over Arizona's educational system and dropout rate of over 40 percent it makes good sense to do



everything possible to ensure that students finish high school. The gaps in education that homeless children experience will undoubtedly hurt them later, but schools seem to have responded passively to the homeless crisis, hoping it will go away or viewing homelessness as only a temporary condition. Many of these children are without a home for months at a time, but their education cannot afford to wait. Schools must reach out to the children and develop ways of working with different populations such as the homeless, pregnant teen-agers, youth on their own, and others.

2. ***The State Department of Education should provide financial incentives from federal and state fund to facilitate the development and expansion of school-based programs like the Apache Junction model which pools funds from several sources and enables children who are at-risk of or victims of homelessness to remain in school by providing counseling, access to social services, bathing facilities, clothing, food assistance, and other services as needed. Adoption of the Model Admissions Criteria by school boards needs to be a condition for elgibility for discretionary state funding. (See recommendation 1, above.)***

Rationale

Early investments in education, especially for children who are "at-risk," are important in increasing performance and reducing the rates of dropouts. Homeless children cannot afford to experience gaps in their education. The school system must adapt to their needs.

3. ***The State Department of Education, supported by other child advocacy organizations, should sponsor legislation which would amend ARS 15-802 and lower the minimum age requirement for school attendance from 8 to 5.***

Rationale

Forty-six states require school attendance younger than age 8. There is now unequivocal evidence that the early years are critical in the formation of social and academic skills. Children who are at the highest risk of academic failure are most likely to be those children who are not sent to school until after the age of five. Sometimes they are kept home to help care for younger children or because their parents have too many problems to be concerned about schooling or th· ' are homeless. These are the very children who desperately need to begin school at age 5.

E. HOUSING

Some Low-Income Housing Facts

Low-income Americans face a housing crisis of unprecedented proportions.

- o More than 7 million renter households who live below the poverty line do not receive any form of federal housing assistance, according to Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies.

- o The average wait on a list for assisted housing in major cities, including Phoenix and Tucson, is 21 months. In nearly two-thirds of these cities, waiting lists are closed (U.S. Conference of Mayors January 1989).

- o Housing costs are topsy-turvy. The lower your income, the more of it you must spend for housing (but the less you can afford). In 1985, three million renter households with household income below $5,000 annually spend over 70% of that meager income for housing costs. This was almost 10 percent of all renter households.

- Nearly 5 million renters and 4.5 million owners still live in housing that is classified by the U.S. Government as substandard.

- Over the next two years, funding commitments for over 250,000 existing contracts which provide federal funds for rent assistance to poor families known as the Section 8 program will expire. Unless Congress provides at least $8 billion in new budget authority in fiscal year 1991 alone, families now receiving these subsidies could be forced out of their apartments or be forced to pay huge rent increases.

- The National Low Income Housing Preservation Commission reported in 1988 that over 500,000 homes receiving HUD subsidies through mortgage insurance programs could be lost to low-income residents because of a combination of owner defaults and conversions to non-low-income use.

- The Commission recommended committing $17 billion over the next 15 years as the most cost-effective way to preserve these units for low-income families.

Federal Policies and Housing

The federal government has sustained a bipartisan commitment to helping Americans find decent, affordable housing since 1937. Yet over 50 years later, only one-third of all American families who meet the government's own test of need are receiving federal housing subsidies. In Phoenix only 1 out of 6 families receive subsidized housing due to the rapid growth rate experienced in our state. Millions of these families are trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty because of the huge amounts of their income which they must pay for rent. These are the "hidden homeless," who are one paycheck or family crisis away from the shelter system and the welfare hotel. These are the families who have been forced to double up in the homes of friends or families, and who will end up homeless unless they can find alternative housing at a price they can afford.

Whatever one's views about the right to home ownership, it is difficult to argue against the right to safe, affordable shelter. Yet the existing stock of low- and moderate-income rental housing is deteriorating drastically throughout the nation. With the exception of a few small programs, virtually all federal housing programs came to a halt in the 1980's as the HUD budget was slashed from 7.4 percent of the total federal budget in fiscal 1978 to less than 1 percent in fiscal 1988.

Even those relatively fortunate poor Americans who receive federal housing assistance are not safe from the threat of homelessness. Millions of apartments now receive federal subsidies under contracts that will expire within the next 19 to 20 years. Hundreds of thousands of other apartment buildings are receiving mortgage subsidies that enable the private, profit-motivated owners to pay off their debts after 20 years and convert their properties to condominiums, high income rentals, or some other use altogether. If steps aren't taken quickly, the nation could lose billions of dollars in investments already made in assisted housing, poor tenants could lose their homes and be forced into the shelter or welfare hotel system, and the housing crisis for poor people could be increased even more.

The high cost of housing also has priced millions of poor people out of the housing market. In 1970, the nation boasted 14.9 million homes that could be rented at 30 percent of a $5000 income. At the same time, the number of renter households with $5,000 per year or less was 8.4 million. But 10 years later, the number of affordable units had dropped to only two million, while the number of renter households with incomes below $5,000 declined only to 5.5 million.

Families have not been the priority of the federal government. According to the Congressional Budget Office, there are varying rates at

everything possible to ensure that students finish high school. The gaps in education that homeless children experience will undoubtedly hurt them later, but schools seem to have responded passively to the homeless crisis, hoping it will go away or viewing homelessness as only a temporary condition. Many of these children are without a home for months at a time, but their education cannot afford to wait. Schools must reach out to the children and develop ways of working with different populations such as the homeless, pregnant teen-agers, youth on their own, and others.

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Whatever one's views about the right to home ownership, it is difficult to argue against the right to safe, affordable shelter. Yet the existing stock of low- and moderate-income rental housing is deteriorating drastically throughout the nation. With the exception of a few small programs, virtually all federal housing programs came to a halt in the 1980's as the HUD budget was slashed from 7.4 percent of the total federal budget in fiscal 1978 to less than 1 percent in fiscal 1988.

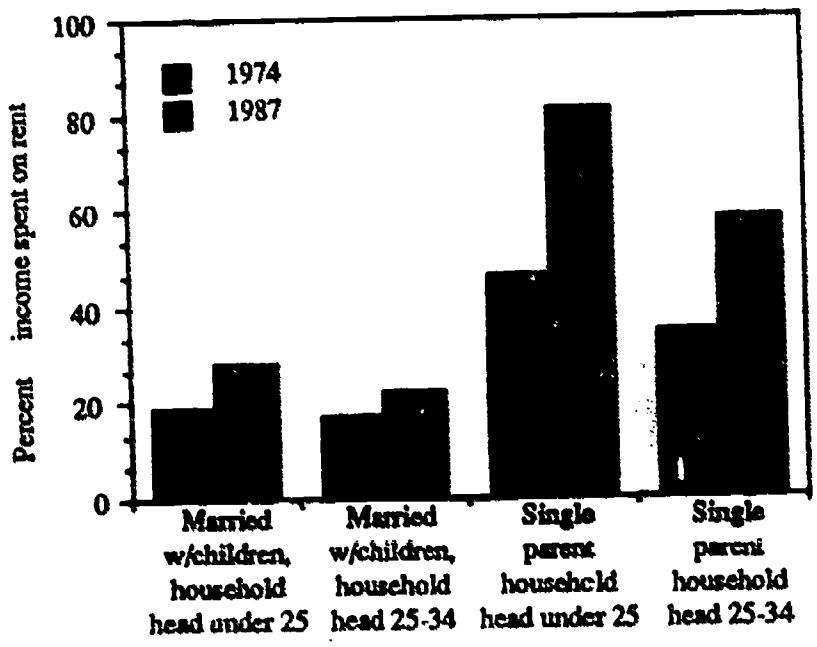
Even those relatively fortunate poor Americans who receive federal housing assistance are not safe from the threat of homelessness. Millions of apartments now receive federal subsidies under contracts that will expire within the next 19 to 20 years. Hundreds of thousands of other apartment buildings are receiving mortgage subsidies that enable the private, profit-motivated owners to pay off their debts after 20 years and convert their properties to condominiums, high income rentals, or some other use altogether. If steps aren't taken quickly, the nation could lose billions of dollars in investments already made in assisted housing, poor tenants could lose their homes and be forced into the shelter or welfare hotel system, and the housing crisis for poor people could be increased even more.

The high cost of housing also has priced millions of poor people out of the housing market. In 1970, the nation boasted 14.9 million homes that could be rented at 30 percent of a $5000 income. At the same time, the number of renter households with $5,000 per year or less was 8.4 million. But 10 years later, the number of affordable units had dropped to only two million, while the number of renter households with incomes below $5,000 declined only to 5.5 million.

Families have not been the priority of the federal government. According to the Congressional Budget Office, there are varying rates at

YOUNG FAMILIES' RENT BURDEN

Rental Costs as a Percentage of Income by Age and Family Type, 1974 and 1987

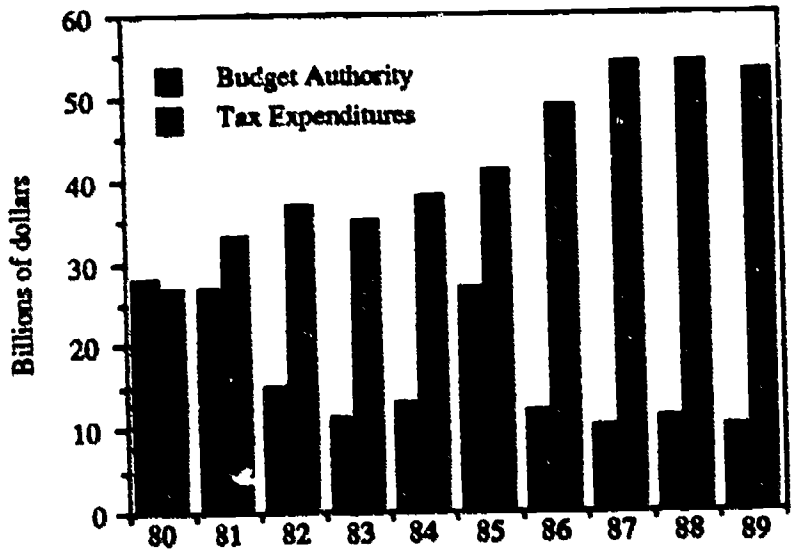


Source: Joint Center for Housing Studies (Harvard University)
Children's Defense Fund, 1989

Note: Maximum acceptable percentage of income spent on rent is generally considered 30%

UNEQUAL HOUSING HELP

Federal Spending for Low-Income Housing and Housing-Related Tax Expenditures



Budget authority: The level of funding that Congress and the president agree to provide for certain programs. Actual spending may be less (but not more) than this amount.

Tax expenditures: This category includes revenues not collected by the federal government because of deductions allowed (primarily to homeowners) for mortgage interest, property taxes, capital gains, and investor deductions. Approximately 52 percent of all federal housing expenditures (including spending and revenue losses) go to the 17 percent of all American households earning more than $50,000 a year.

Source: National Low Income Housing Coalition
Children's Defense Fund, 1989

which different types of households are being served by federally assisted housing programs. For many reasons, including varying eligibility rules, differing subsidy levels, local management practices, and housing market dynamics, housing programs serve various types of households at different rates. "The roughly 2 million outstanding commitments available to the elderly can serve an estimated 51 to 57 percent of all very low-income elderly renters while commitments available to households with children can serve at most 38 percent of those with very low income"(CBO, p. xviiii).

Federal Selection Preferences

On January 15,1988, HUD published a regulation in the Federal Register that will substantially increase the extent to which homeless families are give priority for assisted housing. The regulation says:

"In selecting applicants for admission to its projects, each Public Housing Authority must give preference to applicants who are otherwise eligible for assistance and who, at the time they are seeking assistance, are involuntarily displaced, living in substandard housing, or paying more than 50 percent of family income for rent" (24 CFR).

The mandatory local adoption of federal selection preferences will have a binding effect on housing authorities. That is, any low-income housing program to which the federal selection preferences apply is more likely to benefit homeless families with children than a program to which the same selection preferences do not apply.

What Can Be Done About The Housing Problem?

The National Low Income Housing Coalition believes that ending the low income housing crisis requires the following commitments from the federal government (Zigas, 1989):

- Federal housing policy must guarantee every American the opportunity to live in decent and affordable housing.

- The supply of permanently affordable homes must be increased by at least 750,000 per year through the 1990's.

- There must be no involuntary displacement from any existing federally assisted housing.

An Extra Two Cents

Current spending on housing assistance for low-income people amounts to just over 1 penny of every federal outlay dollar. In order to achieve these goals, spending on affordable housing for low income people should be increased by 2 cents. If two more cents were added to current outlays for low income housing assistance, total annual spending on low income housing would rise from about $15 billion to about $37 billion.

This new investment in affordable housing would provide:

- A universal Section 8 rental assistance program, in which all eligible households could be guaranteed a Section 8 Certificate, will enable families to locate housing renting for under a stipulated fair market value and provides a subsidy for the portion of rent above 30% of their income.

- Renovation of the existing supply of public and privately owned housing over the next five years.

- Funding to provide capital grants and other subsidies to develop and preserve existing affordable housing to ensure that all low income people would have true access to decent homes at a price they could afford.

Trasitional Housing

Although growing numbers of families have joined the ranks of the homeless, Arizona has few specialized programs for homeless families; instead, parents and children are sheltered with adult individual homeless persons, sometimes in congregate and barracks shelters. Congregate shelters include family centers where each family has an apartment with private sleeping accommodations; barracks shelters lack such provisions. Commonly, emergency shelters are rapidly filled to capacity, and the overflow is housed in hotels and motels.

The lack of affordable housing contributes to a devastating cycle of instability and homelessness. Unable to find stable housing, some families move from shelters back to apartments of friends or family, often becoming homeless again. Others find apartments, but due to some combination of economic and noneconomic factors, such as family problems, lose their apartments and must turn to the shelters. The most desirable models for family shelters are small neighborhood-based facilities that house fewer than 20 families.

Transitional facilities are an essential component of a comprehensive long-term system of care for homeless families. The term "transitional" housing, as it applies to homeless families, generally refers to a range of facilities that attempts to bridge the gap between homelessness and permanent housing by providing support services and interim residence. The average length of stay ranges from eight months to a maximum of two years. These programs attempt to provide families with enough time to find stable housing and to mobilize essential resources that will help make their transition into the community successful. In an ideal world, a family who became homeless would be rehoused rapidly in a stable residence in a community that offered comprehensive support services. The bleak realities of the housing crisis and lack of adequate supports, however, cause some families to turn to emergency shelters or transitional programs. Although many of these families could maintain independent housing, especially if offered case management services and appropriate community supports, they are forced to wait indefinitely until affordable housing becomes available. Short-term transitional facilities become an attractive option because the wait for permanent housing may be long and the communities to which families are returning often have sparse services. If the housing supply were ample and coordinated community services readily available, short-term transitional facilities would be unnecessary.

Transitional housing programs offer many potential benefits to homeless clients, but they incur various costs as well, including financial costs to society and psychological costs to their residents. One of the primary psychological costs of transitional housing involves restrictions placed upon the personal freedom of residents. Specialized residential facilities for disadvantaged people, including transitional housing, may unwittingly "ghettoize" their clients and contribute to a process of social stigmatization. Regardless of the extent of community linkages and attempts to mainstream clients into existing programs, the public generally remains hostile and antagonistic to homeless persons living next door. Community resistance to zoning for transitional housing remains formidable, and the stigma associated with homelessness has not significantly diminished.

The cost effectiveness of transitional programs remains a critical issue. Transitional housing is extremely expensive to build and operate, especially where 24-hour on-site staff is required. However, if other less costly approaches cannot ensure the same positive outcomes, the long-term benefits justify the short-term investment, especially when young children are involved. For example, the additional cost involved in providing adequate assistance for young children in homeless families may be substantially less than the eventual societal cost incurred as a result of neglect of inadequate parenting. If some of the

Chapter IV

Federal Government Programs For The Homeless— The Need For State Policies That Ensure Service Coordination

> Cities and towns have a vital stake in the welfare of children and youth in their communities. City elected leaders know first hand the problems associated with poverty, infant mortality, adolescent pregnancy, hunger, child abuse, high school dropout rates, and teenage unemployment. From Phoenix, Arizona, to Portland, Maine, to Miami, Florida, city officials are playing new roles as catalysts for change. It is time now for government, at all levels, to work together to protect and nurture our most precious resource, our children and youth.
>
> Statement by Mayor Terry Goddard
> President, National League
> of Cities to the Board of Directors
> December 3, 1988

Responsibility for alleviating the homeless crisis in Arizona does not rest with a single individual or government agency. For years various private charities, religious groups and nonprofit agencies have responded through missions, clothing and food banks, and private shelters to help feed and shelter families who were homeless. In recent years with the rapid rise in numbers of people in need, the private voluntary sector could no longer handle the burden without help from government at the national, state, and local levels.

States that have developed highly successful programs have recognized the need for long-term systematic solutions, recognizing the different needs within the homeless population. States which have demonstrated leadership in finding answers to the homeless problem, such as California, Massachusetts, Oregon, and Washington, had several things in common.

- Diligent efforts were made by these states to maximize federal funds from traditional sources such as AFDC Emergency Assistance as well as the federal programs established to provide emergency assistance specifically to the homeless.

- There was strong political leadership and interest by the governor and key elected officials, who insisted that state agencies and local government coordinate planning efforts and services to make services responsive and cost effective.

- A cabinet-level office was established and designated with responsibility for bringing together diverse resources of housing, welfare programs, the child welfare system, education, and health, and the private voluntary sector to develop the strategies, financing, and evaluation of programs to address homelessness in the state.

- The unique needs of families and children were recognized, and community-based programs were developed which provided emergency and transitional housing assistance while minimizing the disruption to families and children as much as possible.

FEDERAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

For years a number of existing federal programs have served to address the emergency needs of poor families and children, including the homeless. Until budgets were severely cut during the Reagan years, the federal government took an active role in supporting low-income housing. The traditional welfare programs such as AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) have provided some security for needy children and their parents. Medical care has been available for low-income persons through the Medicaid program (and Arizona's alternative to Medicaid—AHCCCS.) Nutritional assistance continues to be available through the Food Stamp Program and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nutrition program.

As the need for emergency housing has reached crisis proportions, 30 states (not including Arizona) have taken advantage of the Emergency Assistance (EA) and special needs funds available under AFDC. These programs, in which states voluntarily participate, allow for the use of 50 percent federal matching funds to secure temporary shelter and other emergency assistance for needs families with children who are at-risk of becoming homeless. Designed to provide critical aid to at-risk families these funds are, ironically, now being used in some areas to shelter families for extended periods of time. Because of federal restrictions on the use of the funds, they may not be used for permanent housing even when this housing would be far less costly. Although somewhat controversial, some states have begun to use these funds for rent assistance and transitional housing which has resulted in a review of the program by Congress and the Department of Health and Human Services (Solarz, 1988).

Emergency Aid To The Homeless

Congress has a relatively short history of dealing directly with the problem of homelessness. Initially, because homelessness was thought to be a temporary crisis, legislative efforts were of a short-term or emergency nature (Wasem, 1988). In 1983, Congress appropriated 100 million for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program to be funded through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This allowed locally created boards consisting of representatives of charitable organizations and community leaders to distribute funds to local groups providing emergency services. The legislation also appropriated $125 million for the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), which provided for the distribution of surplus food commodities to the needy through the Agriculture Department. Subsequent legislation has extended funding for these programs.

The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act

Homelesssness was elevated to a higher priority on the legislative agenda during the 100th Congress. After passing a supplemental appropriation act providing $50 million in emergency relief funds for the homeless (P.L. 100-6), Congress began work on a comprehensive aid package (Solarz, 1988).

The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (P.L. 100-77) was signed into law in July of 1987 making the federal government an active partner in the fight against homelessness. Companion legislation (P.L. 100-71) provided $355 million in fiscal year 1987 appropriations and $358 million in fiscal year 1988 appropriations. The McKinney legislation contains a number of housing provisions, including providing funding for emergency shelter and supportive housing demonstration projects (plus special funding for projects serving homeless families with children) and authorizing unused government buildings to be converted into shelter for the homeless. The legislation provides grants for each state to ensure that homeless children and youth are served by the public education system, fund

programs that successfully address the needs of homeless elementary and secondary students, and develop literacy programs for homeless adults. A number of programs under the Department of Agriculture were authorized, including outreach programs to inform homeless persons about food stamps, expedited service for homeless persons applying for food stamps, and extended funding for the TEFAP program. In addition, the legislation established a three-year Interagency Council on the Homeless at the federal level.

During the second session of the 100th Congress, the McKinney Act was reauthorized and expanded. New provisions included requiring the Department of Health and Human Services to recommend policy changes to eliminate the need for welfare hotels and funding demonstration projects designed to reduce the number of homeless families in welfare hotels. A total of $285 million was appropriated for FEMA and HUD programs (P.L. 100-404); $78 million was provided through the Departments of Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations (Solarz, 1988).

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act

In 1977, Congress recognized the problem of homeless youth when it extended Title III (The Runaway Youth Act) of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 to serve homeless as well as runaway youth. This action had come in response to pleas from service providers and advocates that many of the "runaway" youth served by the programs were actually homeless (U.S. Congress, Committee on the Judiciary, 1980).

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (H.R. 1801) was incorporated into the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 (H.R. 5210) and reauthorized during the 100th Congress (P.L. 100-960). In addition to continuing authorization for funding of shelter programs and runaway hotlines, the legislation included authorization for a new transitional living program for homeless youth 16 to 21 years of age, provided other runaway programs were finally funded (U.S. Congress, Committee on Education and Labor, 1988). However, because appropriations for fiscal year 1989 did not exceed the required $28 million, no funds were made available for this function.

The Anti-Drug bill also authorized $15 million for drug abuse treatment and prevention programs for homeless and runaway youth, including peer counseling programs; individual, family and group counseling; and community education activities. Funding is available, however, only when appropriations for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act exceed the amount appropriated for the previous year.

Arizona currently receives a total of $340,036 in federal dollars under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, which is the primary funding source of the 20—25 beds in emergency shelters for runaway and homeless youth on their own. In addition the Arizona Department of Economic Security receives $212,000 in federal funds as a result of the passage of the Independent Living Initiative, P.L. 99-272. This law authorizes funds for states, initially for two years, to establish and carry out programs which will assist youth 16 years and older in foster care to make the transition to independent living. It is anticipated that Congress will make independent living services a permanent entitlement as a part of the Social Security act this year and provide an increase in funding.

NEED TO DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

Governmental policies and services to address the homelessness problem must reflect the complexity of issues. These issues fall into nine basic categories (Morrow, 1987).

1. <u>An increased supply of adequate and affordable housing is the most critical ingredient in effective services for homeless families and children</u>. Families become and remain

homeless because they cannot find housing. To obtain low-cost or subsidized housing, families wait on lists for as long as fifteen years—an entire childhood. Homeless families and children need new or alternative housing models, such as modular or mobile units, congregate and shared housing, scattered-site low-income units, family hotels and single-room occupancy structures, family partnerships and matching, and public housing projects. Programs serving homeless families and children must link closely with these permanent housing resources.

2. Employment services are fundamental to helping homeless parents and older homeless youth. Homeless youths need comprehensive job services to prepare them for meaningful employment. Both single-parent and two-parent households need help to find the education, training, and support services they need to assure them of productive futures. Two-thirds of all homeless families are headed by young, single females who often lack the knowledge and skills to locate adequate employment; they may also encounter wage or sex discrimination as they pursue employment. Legal services may be needed to challenge employment systems or to pursue child support payments.

3. Public assistance is not the long term answer, but it can help homeless families bridge the gap. Current programs, however, are woefully inadequate. Grant amounts ensure, rather than alleviate, dependency. Assistance is unavailable to two-parent families in Arizona and in half of the states. Extensive delays in processing often exasperate family crisis. Medical assistance, cited as a critical concern of homeless parents for their children, may not be available. Few public programs offer resources to prevent homelessness. For example, the lack of resources to stave off evictions or utility cutoffs are primary factors in family homelessness.

4. If homelessness among children and families is to be reduced, the design of future interventions must be more comprehensive. Shelter and minimum services fail to solve the problems. Shelter may be the most immediate need, but these people need more than a place to sleep for a night. The extensive spectrum of needs includes transitional and permanent housing; employment; income assistance; education; medical care; social and mental health services; child care; legal aid; and services for special populations (e.g. runaways and battered women).

5. Direct services to homeless children need to be provided. Solely relying on indirect services provided as part of stabilizing families through parent services is ineffective. Direct services for children in shelters have been minimal, nonexistent or crisis-oriented. Shelter children often lack schooling, counseling, structured child care, and other specialized children's programs.

6. Shelter or interim facilities for homeless children and families must also be significantly expanded. The supply of shelter beds for all homeless groups has fallen far short of the need. The lack of resources for homeless families and children is even more severe. Nationwide, one family in three is turned away because of lack of shelter space (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 1987). In two-thirds of the cities surveyed by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, families must break up in

order to be accommodated. Older male children have been housed in shelters that serve only adult males. In the most extreme cases, children have been placed in foster homes while their parents have remained homeless.

7. Homeless families desperately need transitional facilities. Here the goal is to provide longer-term, noncrisis-oriented shelter in hopes of solving the long-term problem permanently. But transitional programs are even scarcer than family shelters. The oldest transitional models are those designed for victims of domestic violence. Each year approximately half a million women and their children become homeless because of domestic violence. The Women's Institute for Housing and Economic Development reports that half of these families are unable to locate transitional programs. Some of these women and children return to abusive homes as the only alternative to continued homelessness. The lack of transitional resources strain shelters as well as homeless families. It is not unusual for families to stay for months in emergency shelters where stays are officially limited to a month or less. Other families cannot be served because sheltered families cannot find the next place to go. Families are released back to the streets or cycled from shelter to shelter.

8. Runaways, throwaways, and other homeless children on their own are also without resources. Estimates by the National Network of Runaway and Youth Services indicate that as many as 200,000 youths are homeless each year. Besides shelter, these youth need continuous support services. As many as 85 percent of America's homeless youth have suffered physical or sexual abuse. Annually, 60,000 children sixteen and older leave foster care. Shelters and runaway programs are designed for crisis intervention and family reunification. Such facilities cannot provide longer term care or comprehensive services to prepare homeless youth for independent living. Programs focused on independent living only became available in the last two years and meet as little as 15 percent of the need.

9. It is essential to prevent homelessness. Recently, some funds have been used to prevent, rather than react to, homelessness. In New York, a new program called Housing Alert sends caseworkers to visit families to determine what additional services would strengthen their fragile living arrangements. In the short term, laws protecting tenants against unnecessary evictions could be enacted or strengthened. In addition, the creation of low-income housing can be leveraged through public/private partnerships, through wise use of properties gained through tax foreclosure, and through collaboration with employment programs to improve and renovate housing stock. Future designs must keep families and children in homes and provide them with services and resources to help them avoid becoming homeless.

THE IMPACT OF THE McKINNEY ACT ON ARIZONA'S CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Federal funds totaling over 12 million have been received by Arizona during 1987 and 1988 with the passage of Public Law 100-77 and subsequent amendments of 1988 (P.L. 100-628) to the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. Over 20 McKinney Act Programs to address homelessness are coordinated and provided by all levels of government and the private sector.

THE COMPREHENSIVE HOMELESS ASSISTANCE PLAN

The 1989 Arizona Comprehensive Homeless Assistance Plan (CHAP) specifically addresses the needs of the homeless population in the state, contains an inventory of facilities and services that assist the homeless population, recommends strategies for service delivery, and outlines how federal funds will be used.

The services and programs are identified as being provided along a continuum of a three-tiered service strategy, which ranges from emergency housing and support services to affordable housing and support services to assisting people to live independently. The Comprehensive Homeless Assistance Plan states that "There is a great need to maintain and expand all services for the homeless." The service delivery model outlined in the state plan also recommends services especially for families and children as target populations.

The Community Services Administration of the Department of Economic Security has served as the self-designated "temporary" contact point for Arizona coordination many of the federally funded programs to assist the homeless. A coordinating office to administer the programs is required under the federal law and DES has assumed this responsibility without adequate staff resources to carry out all of the necessary functions.

For two years DES has attempted to get legislation passed to establish a Homeless Services Coordinating Office to serve as a clearinghouse and administer these programs, provide technical assistance, and publish in-depth information on the status of the problems and services in the state. The requested appropriation was for $128,000 to fund the office. The bill died in the 1989 session without a committee hearing.

Because Arizona still does not have a designated program administrator to coordinate all of the federally funded services for the homeless, the state has not been able to take advantage of all available federal funding. The McKinney Act earmarks federal funds for more than 20 programs that provide emergency and transitional services for the homeless; these can be cumbersome to administer. Some of the federal grants are competitive and local programs often need technical assistance or matching funds in order to apply.

COORDINATION OF FEDERAL AND STATE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

Recommendations

1. ***The governor should immediately designate an Office for Services to the Homeless by Executive Order to ensure that homeless Arizonans are a state priority, ensure compliance with the McKinney Act, maximize the potential of federal and foundation funding to the state, provide state-level policy direction, and promote joint efforts by state agencies to address problems.***

Rationale

Because of lack of coordination of efforts and focused attention, Arizona is missing out on federal and private dollars which could be utilized to help families and children as well as older youth on their own who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless. Strengthening and coordinating efforts would eliminate duplication and make services more accessible to homeless Arizonans who need them. Creation of a homeless services office at the executive level would enable the governor to give this problem the attention and priority it requires and direct and focus state agencies that provide services to begin addressing the short-and long-range solutions to the problems. The office should advocate for services for the homeless with the Arizona Congressional delegation and bring together any emergency response programs with preventative and longer range services.

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Child Welfare Specialist and principle author of this report

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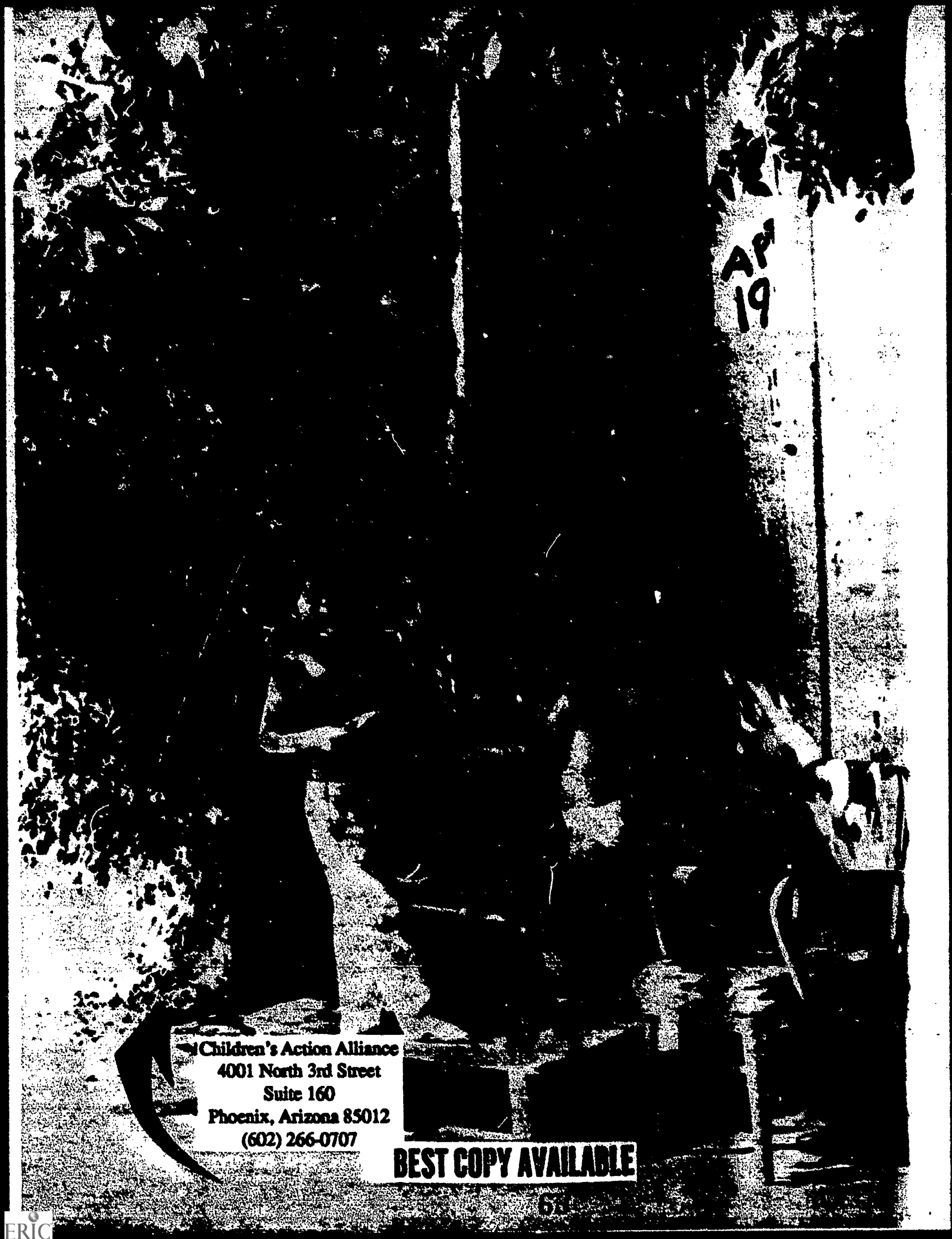

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