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# AMERICA'S YOUNGEST OUTCASTS

Child Homelessness in America

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Policy Platform
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## Short-Term Relief for Children Experiencing Homelessness



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON  
Family Homelessness

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Congress spent much of the Fall 2008 legislative session passing a corporate bailout package, The Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008.<sup>144</sup> Nine of the largest banks in the U.S. were given \$25 billion each in the first round of financing, which ultimately will total \$700 billion.<sup>145</sup>

Children without homes are also in crisis. Their plight doesn't make the headlines, but the future of many American children is tied to the economic recession. According to a study conducted by the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY), foreclosures and the economic downturn are the largest contributing factors to the increase in child homelessness seen by educators nationwide (FN). As this Report Card documents, the health, education, and economic well-being of children and their families are in dire need of attention.

Children who are homeless need the same things that other children need to grow up healthy and happy: a safe and stable home; access to quality schools; affordable and reliable health care; healthy meals every day; opportunities to play in safe neighborhoods; strong attachments with caregivers.

Many homeless children are exposed to unsafe neighborhoods and unstable housing. Their health care and school attendance is erratic. They have too often experienced hunger, violence, and disrupted relationships with family, friends, and caretakers. These experiences are extremely costly in both human and economic terms.

In this section, we make various policy recommendations that can be enacted at the state and/or federal levels. Turning these policies into legislation is critical to ending child homelessness, but these recommendations will take time and resources to implement. In the meantime, local, state, and federal governments can take immediate action to help children without homes. These actions can lay the groundwork for ending child homelessness and include: designing comprehensive strategies for addressing the needs of homeless children, developing family-oriented programs for homeless children and their families, strengthening partnerships among stakeholders serving vulnerable children, and collecting data on residential instability. Most important, we must reallocate dollars so that they are used most efficiently and devote the limited funding available in ways that are most effective—and at the same time continue to advocate for increased resources and opportunities for these children.

Short-term federal activities should include the following:



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## Housing

- Capitalize the new National Housing Trust Fund at \$10 billion for two years to rehabilitate or build 100,000 rental homes for the lowest income households using green standards.
- Fund 400,000 new Housing Vouchers at \$3.6 billion for two years to provide the lowest income households with rent assistance.
- Fund the homelessness prevention component of the Emergency Shelter Grant program at \$2 billion for two years to prevent low-income households from becoming homeless and to rapidly re-house those that do lose their homes; 400,000 households will be assisted.
- Set aside one-third of housing vouchers, National Housing Trust Fund resources, and other housing program resources for homeless families and families who are at risk of homelessness (50% of the Federal Poverty Level).
- Protect renters from sudden displacement and assure continuity of voucher assistance for tenants in rental properties in foreclosure.
- Keep homeowners stably housed by requiring banks and other mortgage holders to approve affordable loan modifications.

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## Education

- Fully fund Subtitle B of Title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431) at \$210 million to ensure that every homeless child can enroll in and attend school, and receive the services they need to succeed.

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## Supportive Services

- Adopt the proposed \$2 billion for the Emergency Shelter Grant and ensure that 30% (\$6 million) is dedicated to trauma-informed services for children and families.
- Invest \$3 billion into child care vouchers for children experiencing homelessness so that they can receive the early care and education they deserve, and so that their parents can engage in employment, job training, and other activities to lift their families out of homelessness.
- Allocate funds within all federally funded programs to support training, technical assistance, and the development of career ladders for service providers working with homeless children.
- Fully fund the Violence Prevention and Services Act at \$175 million and increase the Victims of Crime Act cap to \$717 million annually.

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### Income

- Expand the TANF contingency fund so that states are able to provide cash assistance to the increasing number of very poor families.<sup>146</sup>

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### Hunger

- Provide a temporary increase in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, which states should implement within 30 to 60 days of enactment.<sup>147</sup>

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### Planning & Data Collection

- Require the federal Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) to make child and family homelessness a high priority.
- Require all studies and programs supported by federal agencies and serving low-income people to collect data on the housing status of program beneficiaries.
- Coordinate Congressional committee activities on Homelessness with the Federal ICH.

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