Youth Homelessness in Chicago

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Homelessness is a significant social problem in Chicago, with approximately 80,000 people are counted as homeless. The city runs six warming shelters that offer warmth and comfort for the homeless when temperatures are low. Of the six centers, two operate for 24hours a day, all week. The warming shelters are backed by city buses that provide comfort at night. The youth in Chicago are also affected by the pandemic of homelessness. A study done at the University of Chicago on 215 homeless young adults revealed that most of the victims experienced homelessness from a very young age.

Demographics

Approximately 80,000 individuals in Chicago are regarded as homeless (Gonzales, 2019). Around 80% of them seek solace in peoples’ residences while the rest live in homeless shelters or outdoors. A report in the Chicago Tribune also revealed that 18,000 homeless people have completed college education while 13,400 have jobs (Nickeas, 2019). In 2015, Statistics from the Coalition for the Homeless in Chicago revealed that approximately 11,000 young adults aged 14-21 lived in temporary dwellings (Huggins, 2016). Their residences vary from shelter homes, doubling-up in peoples’ houses, and living in the cold streets.

According to Sheehy (2018), the plight of the youth is not a new discussion topic. Multiple surveys and interviews, both ancient and current, have revealed various problems faced by young adults. Among them include lack of adequate housing, racial identities, gender issues, sexuality rangles, and legal proceedings. Despite the numerous studies conducted on the youth, there are still information gaps.

Many people are guided by negative stereotypes, like substance use among the youth, to judge the problem of homelessness. The lack of adequate data on the matter fuels such views, and it puts the young generation at risk. In Chicago, for example, no studies can confirm the exact number of homeless youths or detail how they end up in the streets. The lack of sufficient insight into the pandemic inhibits policy making, service provision, and proper intervention.

Solutions

The University of Illinois Hospital treats homelessness as an illness. It provides hospitality for homeless individuals who pay recurrent visits to the institutions. The intervention is known as Better Health Through Housing as it seeks to provide adequate housing with a vision of reducing overall healthcare costs. The program aims at comforting the unfortunate and protecting them from injury, violence, or harsh weather. The institution finds chronically homeless persons and provides supportive housing. After that, a study is launched on the individuals, which helps assess the effectiveness of the intervention.

For the youth, providing permanent and affordable housing is a viable solution. Various architectural programs have been launched with the aim of housing young adults. Governments should increasingly build standard and affordable community areas that are supplied with necessary utilities. This strategy offers a more reliable solution than institutional housing, as the at-risk youth can own the homes permanently. Owning homes will boost their confidence and ego and help them become responsible citizens.

Data collection methods also affect the credibility of information and the involvement of victims in studies. According to Sheehy (2018), youths are more expressive and revealing during personal interviews. Contrary to the belief of privacy and stigmatization, individuals offer sufficient and credible information through interviews. Therefore, future studies should encourage affected youths to come forward and fight homelessness.

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