

# The Crisis of Family Homelessness in L.A. County By the Numbers

May 2009

## The invisible crisis of family homelessness in LA County:

- A Fall 2007 Gallup poll revealed that 76% of residents in Los Angeles think of the homeless as mainly adult individuals, with only 6% perceiving the homeless as consisting of both individuals and families.i

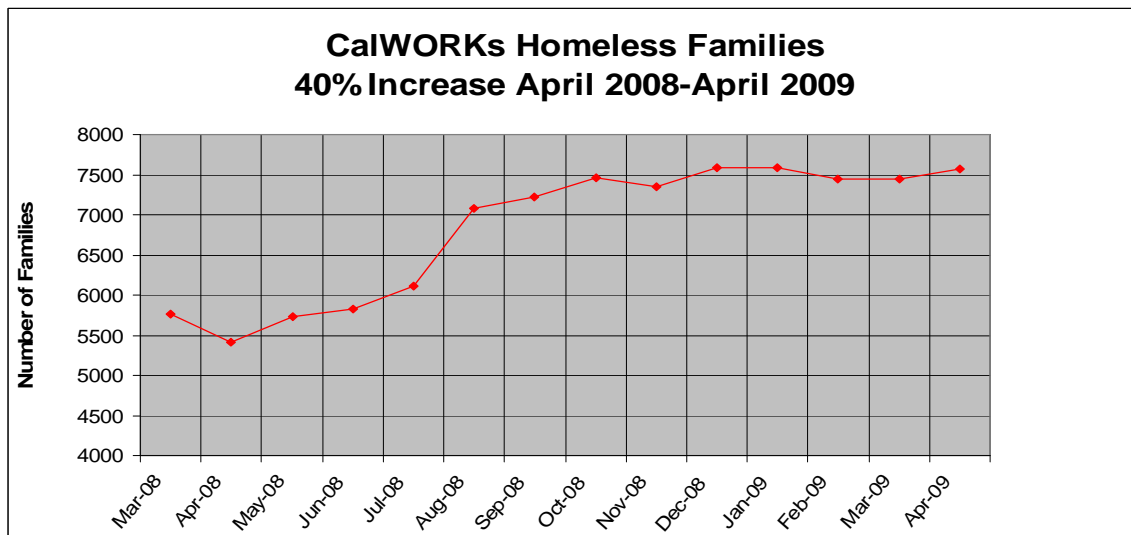
## LAHSA survey reports of homeless families in the County of Los Angeles:ii

- 2005: 7397 families or 19,882 individuals in families (24% of total homeless population)
- 2007: 6238 families or 16,643 individuals in families (24% of total homeless population)
- Percent change 2005-2007: these numbers represent a decrease of 16% in family homelessness.
- NOTE: January 2009 Homeless Count numbers will be available in Summer 2009.

## Despite past reported decreases, more recent data indicate large increases in family homelessness, with largest spikes occurring in last 12 months\*:

- LAUSD June 2008 Count Summary: 12,087 children (pre-k through 12<sup>th</sup> grade), a 50% increase in 3 yearsiii
- L.A. County DPSS reports a 12% increase between September 2007 and September 2008 in the number of CalWORKs families who are known to be homeless.iv
- L.A. County DPSS reports a 40% increase (nearly 2,200 families) between April 2008 and April 2009 in the number of CalWORKs families who are known to be homeless.v
- L.A. County DPSS counted 7,574 homeless CalWORKs families in April 2009 compared to 5,415 families in April 2008.vi
- The 2008-2009 Winter Shelter Program administered by LAHSA saw an 87% increase from 2007-2008 in the number of homeless families utilizing one of the contracted programs.vii

\*Note: LAUSD, DPSS, and LAHSA definitions of homelessness differ, affecting to some degree numbers reported.



### **Shelter system capacity for families in LA County is wholly inadequate:viii**

- The capacity of family shelters in Los Angeles County is 3155 beds for 1033 families on any given night.
- Of available beds within the Continuum of Care, 64% are provided through transitional housing programs and 36% through emergency shelters.

### **Sheltered status of homeless families in LA County:ix**

- 2005 LAHSA Count: approximately 87% of family members (17,202 individuals) were unsheltered, while over 13% (2680 family members) were in emergency shelters or transitional housing.
- 2005 LAHSA Count: family members made up only 19% of emergency shelter residents and only 35% of transitional housing program residents in the entire Continuum of Care.
- 2007 LAHSA Count: Nearly 82% (13,618) of family members were unsheltered, while over 18% (3,025) were living in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or staying at a hotel or motel using vouchers.
- 2007 LAHSA Count: 15% of shelter residents were members of families, while 34% of residents in transitional housing programs were members of families; 57% of persons (455) vouchered in motels or hotels were members of family units
- 2007 LAHSA Count: 24% of the estimated total unsheltered homeless population consisted of families; this estimate represents the same proportion of families, as estimated in the 2005 Count.

### **LA County's unsheltered homeless population compared to national figures:x**

- The Los Angeles County Continuum of Care's unsheltered homeless population in 2007 was higher than the national average reported in the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) by all Continuums of Care in 2005.
- The AHAR found that in 2005, 45% of homeless people reported in the national point-in-time count were unsheltered, compared to 83% in the 2007 Los Angeles County point-in-time count.

### **Emergency shelter and transitional housing programs have to turn away families:**

- 85% of emergency shelter and transitional housing programs participating in a recent survey reported having to regularly turn away families due to the lack of available beds.xi

### **Tightening entry requirements among shelter providers:xii**

- Almost 40% of surveyed providers reported instituting more restrictive entry requirements during a three-year period, 2002-2005.
- Two-parent families were not allowed in 41.7% of programs. Boys over a specified age were ineligible in 37.5% of programs; the average maximum age was 11.4 years old.
- Sobriety for a specified period of time was a prerequisite for acceptance in 41.7% of short-term housing programs; the average length of sobriety required was seven months.
- Nearly one-quarter (22.9%) of family shelter programs did not accept clients who were diagnosed with a serious mental illness or were taking psychotropic medications.

### **Increased lengths of stay in programs:xiii**

- Over 40% of family shelter operators reported that the length of time clients stayed in their programs had increased over the past three years (2002-2005).

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- i *Fannie Mae. Homelessness in America: Americans' Perceptions, Attitudes and Knowledge. General Population Survey & City Surveys. November 2007.*
- ii Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. 2005 and 2007 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Counts. Los Angeles: Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority.
- iii *Personal communication between Ryan Macy-Hurley, Beyond Shelter, and Melissa Schoonmaker, LAUSD Homeless Education and Teen Parent Programs, January 12, 2009.*
- iv Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Number of Homeless Families Climbing Due to Recession. January 2009.
- v *Personal communication between Ryan Macy-Hurley, Beyond Shelter, and Jose Salgado, DPSS, Human Services Administrator II, CalWORKs Section, June 1, 2009.*
- vi *Ibid.*
- vii *Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. April 6, 2009 Press Release on Winter Shelter Program. Los Angeles: Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority.*
- viii *Shelter Partnership, Inc. Operating at Capacity: Family Shelters in Los Angeles County. 2006. Los Angeles: Shelter Partnership, Inc.*
- ix *Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. 2005 and 2007 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Counts. Los Angeles: Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority.*
- x *Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. 2007 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Counts. Los Angeles: Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority.*
- xi *Shelter Partnership, Inc. Operating at Capacity: Family Shelters in Los Angeles County. 2006. Los Angeles: Shelter Partnership, Inc.*
- xii *Ibid.*
- xiii *Ibid.*