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# **Doing Your Part: Understanding Homelessness (and How to Plug In)**

According to CNBC, homelessness in the U.S. [has risen exponentially](https://www.cnbc.com/2022/01/07/why-the-us-cant-solve-the-homelessness-crisis.html) in recent years, with over 600,000 Americans unhoused in 2020. This devastating statistic speaks to the great degree of change that needs to be affected when it comes to housing. But the good news is that you can do your part to plug in and help the cause. Today, [Partners for Housing](http://partnersforhousing.org) explains how you can support your local unsheltered population today.

## **The Cause and Effect of Homelessness**

Homelessness is a complex and multifaceted problem with no easy solutions. Many factors contribute to homelessness, including poverty, lack of affordable housing, mental illness, and addiction. For example, in the United States, [1 in 8 households is considered "severely rent burdened,"](https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/notes/feds-notes/assessing-the-severity-of-rent-burden-on-low-income-families-20171222.html) meaning they spend more than 50% of their income on rent. Thus, when faced with paying for housing or other necessities, many people are forced to choose to go without a place to live. According to the BBR Foundation, [mental illness and addiction](https://www.bbrfoundation.org/blog/homelessness-and-mental-illness-challenge-our-society) are also common among people who are unhoused. One study found that nearly one-third of adults experiencing homelessness have a severe mental illness, making it challenging to maintain a stable income or housing. The effects of homelessness [are thus extremely far-reaching](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9264584/) and can include poor physical and psychological health, social isolation, and unemployment, which is why it's such an important issue for us to tackle when possible.

## **What Can You Do to Help?**

While it can seem like the homelessness problem is too big for you to help, remember that every small step counts. Tackling the issue may seem less abstract if you approach it on a micro level - i.e., how can you help the local homeless population in your area or neighborhood? Here are some specific ways you can help:

* **Donate money or items to local homeless organizations, shelters, or food banks:** Homeless shelters and food banks rely on donations to help people in need. [You can donate money](https://bkrhc.org/get-involved/) or items such as food, clothing, or hygiene products.
* **Volunteer your time at a shelter or food bank:** Many homeless shelters and food banks rely on volunteers to help with everyday tasks, such as serving meals, sorting donations, or providing other necessary assistance.
* **Provide temporary housing for a homeless person or family:** If you have an extra room in your home, you can temporarily house a homeless person or family. This can be a great way to help someone get back on their feet.
* **Advocate for policies that help the homeless:** You can help make a difference for the homeless population by [advocating for policies that provide housing](https://www.apa.org/advocacy/guide/who-to-contact) and other assistance. To do this, simply contact your local representatives and let them know your thoughts on homeless policies.
* **Start a nonprofit:** [Setting up a nonprofit](https://www.zenbusiness.com/nonprofit-corp/) is the ultimate way to give back because you'll be able to raise funds, affect change with policymakers and change lives on a larger scale.
* **Educate yourself and others about homelessness:** Many people have misconceptions about homelessness. You can help dispel these myths by educating yourself and others about the realities of homelessness. This can help create more compassion and understanding for people who are experiencing homelessness.
* **Organize a charity run:** This is a great way to [raise both awareness and revenue](https://www.fundraiserhelp.com/organize-a-charity-run-walk.htm) about homelessness. Also, if you hold the event in an area with a high walk score, you’ll be more likely to gain participants [who can incorporate their errands](https://www.redfin.com/how-walk-score-works) into the event.

Giving back is one of the [most rewarding, fulfilling processes](https://due.com/blog/7-reasons-giving-back-makes-your-more-fulfilled/) out there. Not only that, but helping out those in need is a great way to do your part in making change happen and an excellent way to give back. Whether it's time, money, or resources, no step is too small!

[***Partners for Housing***](http://partnersforhousing.org) ***is working hard to fight homelessness.*** [***Click here***](https://partnersforhousing.org/get-involved/) ***if you’d like to get involved!***