



HUNGER & HOMELESSNESS
AWARENESS WEEK

ACTIVITY BOOKLET

ONE NIGHT WITHOUT A HOME

**“Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25 U
Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate
for the health and well-being of himself and of his
family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical
care and necessary social services, and the right to
security in the event of unemployment, sickness,
disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of
livelihood in the circumstances beyond his control.”**

**General Assembly of the United Nations
December 10, 1948**

LEHIGHCHURCHES.ORG/HHAWEEK

These activities are designed to help groups and individuals think through homelessness and its effects. Remembering that no two cases are alike and everyone is one life-altering event away from being without a home.

ACTIVITY #1

The TRUTH or NOT* About Homelessness in the Lehigh Valley

Circle True or False for each statement below.

1. There are people who don't have a home in the Allentown.
True / False
2. There are people who choose not to have a home.
True / False
3. All people without a home sleep on the street.
True / False
4. There are children in Bethlehem who don't have a home.
True / False
5. People without homes are lazy and don't work.
True / False
6. It would be cool to have no home because you can go anywhere and do anything you want.
True / False
7. All people who don't have a home are addicted to drugs or alcohol.
True / False
8. Homelessness only happens in big cities.
True / False
9. If we had more homes there would be no homelessness.
True / False
10. There is nothing we can do about homelessness.
True / False

**answers on page 8*

ACTIVITY #2

How Vulnerable Are You?

The following survey illustrates some of the factors that can lead to homelessness. When several of these exist, and there isn't strong family support, people are at risk of becoming homeless. Consider the following:

- Could you ever become involved in a flood, fire, tornado, or other natural disaster?
- Do you work in an area of the job market where your job might become obsolete?
- Could you ever suffer a long-term illness or accident without proper health benefits or other compensations?
- Could a down turn in the economy, or change in your local economy cause you or your family to lose a job(s)?
- Do you live in a household with only one full time wage earner?
- Are you behind in monthly bills, have high credit card debt, or have a home in foreclosure?
- Are housing costs in your area increasing faster than wages are increasing?
- Does anyone in your family struggle with alcohol, drug, or other addictions?
- Has there ever been any form of domestic violence or abuse in your family?
- Do you have money in savings/live insurance to cover living expenses should your spouse die unexpectedly?

ACTIVITY #3

Choose it or Lose it

Imagine that you and your family were just told that you have 10 minutes to vacate your home. What are the reasons you would have to leave? You can only take whatever fits into a backpack. What things would you take with you? What things would you find most difficult to leave behind?

Things to discuss...

- Why did you choose the items you took and left behind?
- How did it feel to make your choices?
- How will you do without the things that you left behind
- Where will you get the things you need but no longer have?

ACTIVITY #4

Poverty Quiz

1. Who is poor in America: Are there more men or women living in poverty?
2. True or False? Nearly one in five children in the U.S. lives in poverty.
3. Each month Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which provides households a monthly stipend to purchase groceries, helps fee how many people?
 - a. 40 million
 - b. 4 million
 - c. 400,000
4. Which of the following reasons is not a reason why people utilize payday lending programs?
 - a. Underemployment
 - b. Stagnating wages
 - c. Low-interest rates
 - d. Rising cost of living
5. The Official Poverty Rate for 2021 was 12.8%. What is Allentown's poverty rate?
6. Which state has the highest poverty rate?
 - a. Texas
 - b. Mississippi
 - c. West Virginia
7. Which of the following activities addresses a root cause of poverty?
 - a. Volunteering at a homeless shelter
 - b. Advocating for the rights of workers
 - c. Donating to a food pantry
8. Which age group has the highest poverty rate in the United States?
 - a. Adults
 - b. Children
 - c. Elderly
9. Are rates of homelessness higher in urban or rural settings?
10. What is the cause of increased homelessness in America?
 - a. Financial cut backs in safety net programs
 - b. Student loan borrowing
 - c. Lack of affordable housing

*answers on page 9

ACTIVITY #5

Play SPENT: www.playspent.org

PlaySpent, designed to help people understand the challenges and trade-offs faced by low-income people with insecure employment. The “game” begins when you’ve been unemployed, have only \$1,000 left in your bank account, and need to get a low wage job.

1. How long did it take you to run out of money?
2. What was the hardest choice you had to make?
3. What surprised you?
4. How much did healthcare impact your monthly budget?
5. If you could only choose between one of the following, which would you select?
 - a. A strong support system
 - b. A better paying job that required working longer hours
 - c. Additional social services programs to utilize
6. What was the reason for your choice?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Real Life Experience

In this activity, you are given a scenario and need to come up with ideas on how you'd manage to find housing based on your own circumstances. Below are some true-life scenarios:

We are a family of a mother, father, and four children from three weeks to five years old. Until two weeks ago we lived in a trailer. We didn't have insurance or nearby relatives. Dad was laid off from his factory job where he made \$880 per month. We stayed in a motel until our money ran out.

We are a family of a mother, father, and four children aged 1 1/2 to 7 years. Mom works as a janitor from 5pm to 1am and earns \$250 per week. When the neighbors complained about our noisy kids, the landlord evicted us. For two months we camped out, but it's getting too cold now. We have \$300 in savings.

I am a single mother with three children, ages 3, 9, and 11. I left my boyfriend because our relationship wasn't working out. I don't have a job and I didn't finish high school. My income is \$688 per month from a government program.

I am 39 years old and I have never worked. When I was 15 they put me in a special school, and I didn't learn very much about how to take care of myself there. Now they have let me leave, and I get \$471 per month from a government program called SSI. They give money to people who they say have "physical or mental disabilities." I want to live in my own apartment.

We are a family of five people. I have a spouse and three children, ages 11, 7, and 5. My parents paid for my college education, and soon afterward I moved to Vermont and started working at an investments company. I have been there for 12 years now. I make \$27 per hour or \$4320 per month.

I am single and 46 years old. Since high school, I've worked in restaurants. Because my work schedule was different each week, I couldn't take college courses. I was making \$720 per month as a dishwasher, but business was slow, and my hours were cut. Now I make \$450 per month. I need a job in town because I don't have a car.

We are a family of a mom, dad, and 3 children, ages 12, 9, and 5. We moved here because we were expecting a farm job which did not exist. We now receive \$870 per month from a government program called TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families).

We are a family of a mom, dad, and 4 children. Mom works at a department store and makes \$7.25 per hour or \$1,160 per month. Dad is a part-time janitor during the day and takes care of us after school and at night. He works twenty hours per week at \$7.25 per hour and makes \$580 per month. If he worked full-time, we would need daycare and we can't afford that.

What Causes Homelessness?

The purpose of this activity is to help participants remove some of our own stereotypes about people who don't have a home, by gaining an understanding of the reasons why some people might not have a home.

This is an open discussion and there are no right or wrong answers.

Additional First Impressions

Think about a very small home you have seen. What words do you think about when you visualize this?

Think about a homeless person you have seen either in photos or in real life. What words do you think of when visualizing this person?

What is a stereotype?* What is a stereotype that you may have personally experienced? How did that make you feel? Many stereotypes are the result of a lack of accurate information.

* Essential meaning from Merriam-Webster - to believe unfairly that all people or things with a particular characteristic are the same // *It's not fair to stereotype a whole group of people based on one person you don't like.*

***ANSWERS, Activity #1**

1. True

It is estimated that 1,426 people are experiencing homelessness in Allentown today.

2. True

For various reasons, some people choose to live outside. These people need supports in order to survive - warming shelters, soup kitchens and medical care.

3. False

People without a home can be temporarily staying with friends, relatives or sleeping in shelters.

4. True

The age at which people are at the highest risk of entering a homeless shelter in the United States is infancy.

5. False

Over 44% of homeless people are employed.

6. False

Everything that housed people can do just by walking into another room of their house usually requires a person experiencing homelessness to travel several miles.

7. False

Poverty and homelessness seeps into every aspect of life and can begin with just an unfortunate event: reduction in work hours; illness; fire; domestic violence.

8. False

In no state, metropolitan area or county can a full-time, minimum wage worker afford a modest two bedroom apartment.

9. False

The shortage of affordable housing is contributing to the homelessness situation, not lack of housing.

10. False

There are many ways we can help those who are homeless: additional mental health services; advocating for living wages; building affordable housing; to name just a few.

*ANSWERS, Activity #4

1. Women. 16.3% of women live in poverty while only 13.8% of men do. Although women are making huge strides in our country, they are still greatly impacted by poverty. In fact, 26.6% of single moms live in poverty—that's more than one in every four single moms.
2. True! In 2016, 15.3 million kids were living in poverty out of the 72 million children in the United States. Children of color are even more likely to live in poverty. The poverty rate for Hispanic children is 1 out of 4. While for Black and Native American children, it is around 1 out of 3.
3. 40 million people, who are mostly children, seniors and people with disabilities, rely on SNAP to put food on their tables. This astounding number is in part due to food prices rising much faster than wages.
4. Low-interest rates. Payday lending programs involve using a worker's paycheck as collateral for short-term, high-interest loans. Stagnating wages, underemployment, and rising costs of living have combined to create heavy financial stress for many in the U.S., especially those living in and near poverty.
5. 27.3% of Allentown residents live below the poverty line. That is more than 111% higher than the Pennsylvania average.
6. Mississippi. In 2021, Mississippi had a staggering 20.3% poverty rate, with a statewide median household income of \$46,511. The percent of the population aged 65 years and over that lives below the poverty line is 12.8%, tied with Louisiana for the highest level for this age group.
7. Advocating for the rights of workers, including livable wages, is one way we can help address the root causes of poverty. This is one way of changing systems and structures that prevent opportunities for people to get out of poverty. Such an approach goes beyond acts of charity—e.g., donating food or money—to respond to the immediate needs of families in poverty.
8. Children are our most vulnerable. In 2016, 15.3 million kids lived in poverty out of 72 million children in the United States. Childhood poverty can have significant consequences for children's development and life chances. Not only are they more likely to be poor as adults, growing up in poverty can be harmful to children's cognitive development, ability to succeed in school, and to their health.
9. Rural. The odds of being poor are between 1.2 to 2.3-times higher for people in non-metropolitan areas than in metropolitan areas. People who are homeless people in rural areas are more likely to be white, female, married, currently working, homeless for the first time, and homeless for a shorter period of time.
10. Two trends are largely responsible for the rise in homelessness over the past 20-25 years: a growing shortage of affordable rental housing and a simultaneous increase in poverty. Persons living in poverty are most at risk of becoming homeless, and demographic groups who are more likely to experience poverty are also more likely to experience homelessness



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