

**Women and Children's Shelters: Literature Review**

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## **Women and Children's Shelters: Literature Review**

A women and children's shelter is a place that women and children go to for temporary housing, protection, and use of resources. A women's and children's shelter provides women and children with basic necessities such as a bed to sleep in, a bathroom, food, and feminine products. These shelters also provide counseling, support groups, and skills workshops to help women move on independently after staying at a shelter. These shelters are vital to the community because many women and their children across the country find themselves in need of the resources provided by the shelters. Women and children may need these shelters for many reasons; however, the main reasons are due to women in poverty, victims of violence, and homelessness. Poverty can make it difficult for women to buy the basic needs for themselves and their children. Women and children experiencing violence know that they are not safe in their homes but often rely on their abuser financially. Both of these reasons lead to women becoming homeless.

### **Student 1: Kaitlyn Loewenstein**

#### **Female homelessness and period poverty**

The price of feminine products can significantly contribute to women experiencing poverty in many ways. It is not a choice for a woman to buy feminine products. The price of these products increases each year. Throughout a lifetime, the average woman spends around \$18,000 on feminine hygiene products, or \$20 every cycle (Kim, 2021). Menstrual cups, tampons, and other feminine hygiene supplies are pricey for every individual but more so for low-income women who may find it difficult to pay for their needs. Due to this financial strain on already tight budgets, women may need help paying for other necessities like food, housing,

and healthcare. Shelters try to provide these items for the women, but most shelters are overcrowded. Since these products are so costly, some women may use rags or toilet paper as improvised or unclean substitutes for traditional feminine hygiene products when they cannot purchase them. This can make infections and other health problems more likely, raising the cost burden due to missed work and increased medical costs. Campaigning can focus on removing the sales tax on feminine hygiene products because low-income people are disproportionately affected by these taxes.

Reducing taxes on feminine hygiene products is a step in addressing gender disparities and advancing women's health. This would help many women who go to women's shelters for these items because it lessens the overall cost.

### **Report: Homeless women need safe, affordable, private housing and shelters**

Women's shelters are essential in helping victims of abuse and assault by offering them resources, safety, and support. Women who are victims of assault are at a heightened risk for homelessness due to a combination of factors. More than 90% reported experiencing some victimization (Castillo, 2023). Shelters provide a variety of services to assist trauma survivors in re-establishing their lives and healing from their experiences, such as crisis intervention, counseling, legal representation, and housing. Women's shelter employees are trained in trauma-informed care, which places a strong emphasis on recognizing the effects of trauma on people's lives and offering services in a kind and encouraging way. Being the victim of an assault can result in severe trauma and mental health issues like PTSD, depression, and anxiety. For survivors, these circumstances may make it challenging to go about their everyday lives, keep up stable housing, or get the support resources they need. Peer support groups are facilitated by

women's shelters so that residents can talk about their experiences, offer support, and get ideas for coping mechanisms from one another.

The humiliation, fear, or stigma attached to being assaulted may cause women to isolate themselves from friends and family. They may have fewer options accessible to help them avoid or escape homelessness if they do not have a solid support system to turn to in times of need. Women's shelters are great for helping women get back on their feet.

## **Student 2: Chiquita Baker**

### **Domestic Violence and Abuse**

When someone discusses domestic abuse, they most often associate it with domestic violence. Domestic abuse refers to any attempt by one spouse to dominate and control the other in a marriage or other personal relationship. (Smith & Segal, 2023). The goal of domestic abuse and violence is to obtain and maintain total control over a significant other. To wear down and maintain control over their partner, an abuser will instill feelings of shame, guilt, fear, and intimidation in them (Smith & Segal, 2023). Violence and domestic abuse are widespread problems that can impact everyone. Abuse can occur in heterosexual and same-sex relationships. People of all ages, colors, and socioeconomic backgrounds experience it.

While emotional and verbal abuse is more prevalent in women, men can also experience it. Whether it comes from a woman, a man, a child, or an elderly adult, abuse is never acceptable. Everyone is entitled to feel worthy, safe, and appreciated. The most obvious indicator of an abusive relationship is the dread of the partner, though there are other indicators as well. If you feel you must constantly watch what you say and do around them to avoid a blowup, your

relationship is probably unhealthy. Additional indicators can be a controlling or demeaning partner, as well as despair, hopelessness, and feelings of self-loathing. Shelters are crucial because they offer protection, assist with family and financial resources, and enable women and girls to escape violent situations.

### **Child Abuse: Definition, Signs, Child Neglect, Emotional Abuse**

The abuse of children can have long-lasting emotional and psychological effects in addition to immediate physical injury. The renowned medical facility Cleveland Clinic states that the effects of abuse can take many different forms and have an impact on a child's growth, relationships, and general well-being. Abuse can result in physical damage, such as fractured bones or bruising. It can also emotionally traumatize a person to a great extent and exacerbate mental health conditions, including anxiety, depression, and PTSD (Cleveland Clinic, 2020). Moreover, abused children may struggle with trust, forming healthy attachments, and managing their emotions effectively.

To meet the unique needs of abused children and aid in their healing, The Cleveland Clinic stresses the value of early intervention and all-encompassing support services. Through therapy, education, and advocacy efforts, communities can work together to prevent child abuse and provide a safe environment where every child can thrive. That is where women's and children's shelters come in. In addition to providing a haven while families decide how to proceed, they assist people in escaping intimate partners and domestic abuse. Along with these services, they offer counseling and legal advice to women and their children.

**Student 3: Roxanne Balag**

### **Precursors and outcomes: A look at mental health in relation to homelessness**

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (U.S. HUD, 2023) published that on any night in January 2023, an estimated 653,104 individuals experienced homelessness in the United States—the people without homes stayed in temporary shelters, emergency facilities, abandoned buildings, and unsuitable places for habitation. Treating mental health while in the process of accepting the individual who comes to the facility is often not prioritized. (Pinillo, 2021). For this reason, mental health care is often not addressed in these individuals.

Precursors of homelessness are identified as problems in mental health, such as mood disorders like bipolar disorder (BPD), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and schizophrenia. In contrast, outcomes of homelessness are identified as mental health illnesses such as depression, anxiety, fear, and suicidal thoughts. Treatment options include either a treatment-first or a housing-first model. Consistent with prior research, stronger social ties, and a more extensive support group system lowers depressive symptoms in this population. Although treatment is an option, barriers to treatment are also present. A lack of funds and professional training results in inadequate and fewer services that do not provide a full-scope treatment for problems, which is a barrier. Another barrier is the report of a low level of trust in authority because of paranoia and symptoms of problems in mental health, such as mood disorders like bipolar disorder (BPD), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and schizophrenia, which leads to difficulty in building interpersonal relationships (Pinillo, 2021).

### **A Review of the Impact of Homelessness on Mental Health**

Homelessness has profoundly impacted society and has become a complex issue. Social determinants like housing impact the well-being of an individual significantly in numerous ways,

ranging from difficulty in accessing necessities such as medical care and healthy food options to physical safety. Due to the unpredictable and uncertain nature of homelessness, individuals endure persistent stress from various reasons such as physical disability, financial hardship, and addiction, which can affect mental health and potentially pose a greater risk for vulnerability to develop or worsen mental health conditions. Additionally, exposure to trauma, violence, and social isolation can contribute to mental illness (Anombem et al., 2023).

Various psychiatric disorders such as substance abuse, depression, and Schizophrenia are widely recognized to have a close link with homelessness. Substance abuse plays a role in the onset and prolongation of homelessness. Depression is another challenge in mental health experienced by homeless people that can lead to suicide if not addressed. Another psychiatric condition that significantly affects over 24 million people worldwide is Schizophrenia. Homeless Schizophrenic individuals face complex challenges, including lack or limited access to mental health services, medications, and stability in housing. Providing housing options and mental health support are top priorities to combat homelessness. It is also vital to increase public awareness to reduce stigma by educating and promoting empathy to build a more supportive community (Anombem et al., 2023).

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