NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

Some newly homeless people have jobs but do not earn enough to allow use of a home. Low-cost housing is so tight that one-third of the vouchers for the Section 8 subsidized-housing program are being returned unused, according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Several experts and advocates for the homeless predicted that the number of homeless people would rise in coming months as states and cities, facing budget crises and burdened with security costs, scaled back on financing for housing and other programs that help keep people from becoming homeless, like rent assistance and health care.

A senior policy analyst for the Coalition for the Homeless in New York, Patrick Markee, said: "Now, especially since Sept. 11, we're seeing the recession effect, low-wage workers who were just holding on, messengers, people who work in restaurants turning up at our door. We're going to see it get worse over the next few months."

In Rhode Island, the state is dropping a $5 million housing program from its budget. Yet this month, a crush of homeless people forced the opening of a shelter in an old convent in Warwick, the first new shelter for the homeless in the state in 10 years. This year, 120 families with children have slept on the floor of Travelers Aid, a social service center in Providence that is not a shelter.

In New York, the number of people in shelters, 29,802 as of last month, is the highest ever. According to the Coalition for the Homeless, the number of families in shelters has grown 50 percent in three years, to 6,669, while the percentage of children in shelters has risen 60 percent, to 12,576. Mr. Markee said 1,500 families were being housed in welfare hotels, three times as many as three years ago.

In Boston, officials conducted a census of the homeless on Dec. 10 and found 6,001 homeless people, a record, said Kelley Cronin, director of the Emergency Shelter Commission. Ms. Cronin added that the number of people on the street, 277, was also the highest on record.

Chicago reported in the mayors' survey that the number of people who were homeless or receiving emergency assistance to keep them from becoming homeless had jumped, to 19,421 from 15,682 last year.

In a school district in Sacramento, Liane Ramirez, who works with homeless families, said she had already seen twice as many families living in their cars as she had seen in the previous few years combined.

"We feel like we're seeing a lot more first-time scared-to-death homeless," Ms. Ramirez said. "And we're looking at working homeless, not just welfare homeless."

Some aspects of the problem seem clearly related to the terrorist attacks.

Before Sept. 11, the Boston Rescue Mission, a large shelter, had a $90,000 contract with Delta Air Lines to clean the carpets of its planes. The contract, which the airline had been planning to double, employed 30 homeless people from the shelter, said John Samaan, the president of the mission. After Sept. 11, Delta halved the contract instead, putting one-third of the workers out of work.

In Portland, Ore., the Goose Hollow Family Shelter, the largest family shelter in the city in the winter, usually receives thousands of dollars in donations in September, said Chuck Currie, its director. This year, it received one contribution, for $100.

"I've heard other agencies say contributions have dropped 20 percent to 70 percent," Mr. Currie said.

Programs that provide services to the homeless are also bracing for the state budget cuts.

In Illinois, homeless services are highly likely to be affected by state plans for a $485 million budget cut.

"It's going to send programs like ours into a tailspin," said Diane Nilan, an administrator at a large shelter in Aurora, a Chicago suburb whose shelter has been so crowded that Ms. Nilan has asked for a portable classroom to add space.

In many cities, shelters said they were seeing more people who became homeless after having lost jobs or being priced out of apartments.

In Dallas, Oscar Turner, 52, was laid off from his $8-an-hour job as a Wal-Mart greeter in early October and has been staying at free shelters, unable to afford the small rent that he had paid before. Mr. Turner has looked for work with the city as a crossing guard or maintenance worker, but so far, he said, "it's not going too good."

In Charlotte, N.C., Tyrone Hicklen, 43, was laid off at a party-supply store and has been living in shelters for two months. Unable to find work, he is heading to Kansas to enroll in a truck-driving school.

In Rhode Island, John Swenson, 44, took refuge at the Warwick shelter with his 10-year-old son, Michael, after he could not find work at his home in Hyannis, Mass., and lost a part-time job cooking hamburgers in Warwick.

"It's kind of late in life to be needing something," said Mr. Swenson, unemployed for the first time in 15 years and used to $14-an-hour jobs.

"I knew there were shelters," he said, "and that's part of what kept me out of them. On the Cape, I helped paint the shelter in Hyannis. I went from painting a shelter to being in one."

SUIT OVER EJECTION OF HOMELESS

The Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church went to court to stop the police from ejecting homeless people from its property. The Metro Section, Page D1.

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