



Frequently Asked Questions About Homelessness In Orange County

1. Who are the homeless?

The Orange County homeless population includes families and individuals representing every race, age group and community in Orange County. Often, persons that experience homelessness are negatively portrayed as panhandlers asking for money. On the contrary, Orange County's homeless population consists of working families and individuals. Many live in cars, parks, under bridges, motels, and in homeless shelters trying to maintain their dignity while they struggle to survive. As a result, most homeless remain hidden.

2. How do we count the homeless?

The point-in-time count of the homeless, inventory of housing and the needs assessment are mandated by HUD under the competitive SuperNOFA Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Program.

The housing inventory is conducted annually, whereas, the comprehensive needs assessment and the point-in-time count are biennial.

Records are reviewed, data gathered and sheltered and unsheltered homeless are surveyed, and additional components of the count include gathering the following information:

- Existing inventory of Emergency, Transitional and Permanent Beds
- Sheltered and Unsheltered persons experiencing homelessness
- Supportive Services for the homeless, i.e. showers, meals, outreach
- Housing Authority "waiting list" statistics
- Social Services Agency welfare statistics
- Health Care Agency statistics for persons with special needs experiencing homelessness
- Other regional data

3. How many homeless people experience homelessness annually here in Orange County? How many of these are families with children?

According to the 2006 Needs Assessment, there are approximately 35,065 persons who have experienced a homeless episode in Orange County. Of the 35,065 persons, 24,545 are persons in families with children (approximately 10,227 family units) and 10,520 are unaccompanied individuals.

4. How many homeless shelters are there in Orange County?

There are 68 temporary shelters providing 3,400 beds for the homeless on any given night per the 2006 Housing Inventory survey. Most of these shelters are located in central and north Orange County. While shelters provide emergency and transitional housing for the homeless, most shelters provide services to designated subpopulations such as veterans, victims of domestic violence, and persons with HIV/AIDS, etc. which limits the ability of shelters to serve all subpopulations.

5. Do the homeless work?

Yes. Survey data indicates that a majority of the homeless are working full-time jobs, earning an average income of \$10 or less per hour.



Housing & Community
Services Department
COUNTY OF ORANGE

6. If they work full-time, why are they homeless?

Many working individuals and families have been priced out of the housing market and thrust into homelessness due to wages not keeping pace with increasing rents in Orange County. This trend in rising housing costs is a significant challenge for families working at lower-paying, minimum wage jobs. In 2006, the hourly wage needed for a one-bedroom apartment at Fair Market Rent (\$1,238) was \$23.81 which is over three times the minimum wage (\$7.50/hour) that many Orange County workers earn, potentially keeping even a two-parent working family from affording a one-bedroom apartment. The average Fair Market Rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Orange County is \$1,485 and takes an hourly wage of \$28.56. Securing the first and last month's rent plus a security deposit can make rental housing almost unobtainable.

7. How can you help the homeless situation in Orange County?

- Show respect; a smile or eye contact can help break down the sense of isolation felt by the homeless. The human dignity you share when you show courtesy and respect can give someone the hope and strength they need to lift them out of a bad situation.
- Become informed; learn about the homeless and their challenges. Volunteer your time or donate resources to local nonprofits serving the homeless, hungry and/or at-risk population.
- Get involved in regional planning efforts that support and strengthen the system of care for Orange County's homeless.
- Network with other individuals, nonprofits, businesses, County agencies, and cities to share ideas and best practices on how to most effectively deal with the homeless situation in Orange County.
- Understand that the affordable housing issues affect all of us and that your voice is needed to ensure that every member of our community has access to decent and affordable housing.

8. What is being done to ensure a brighter future for the homeless in Orange County?

Regional strategies are developed through Orange County's Continuum of Care System. The goal of the Continuum of Care Strategic Plan is to work toward a seamless system of care through advocacy, homeless prevention, outreach and assessment, emergency shelter, transitional shelter, and permanent affordable housing.

Filling gaps in this system will bring the promise of a better future for thousands of homeless individuals and families with children living in Orange County. The Continuum of Care System is comprised of many different public/private agencies and individuals in various regions of the county dedicated to working toward improving the lives of those members of our community with the greatest need. *You can be a part of the solution!*

If you want to help the homeless or know of someone who needs help, please contact:

2-1-1 Orange County

www.211oc.org
Dial 2-1-1 or (888) 600-4357

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