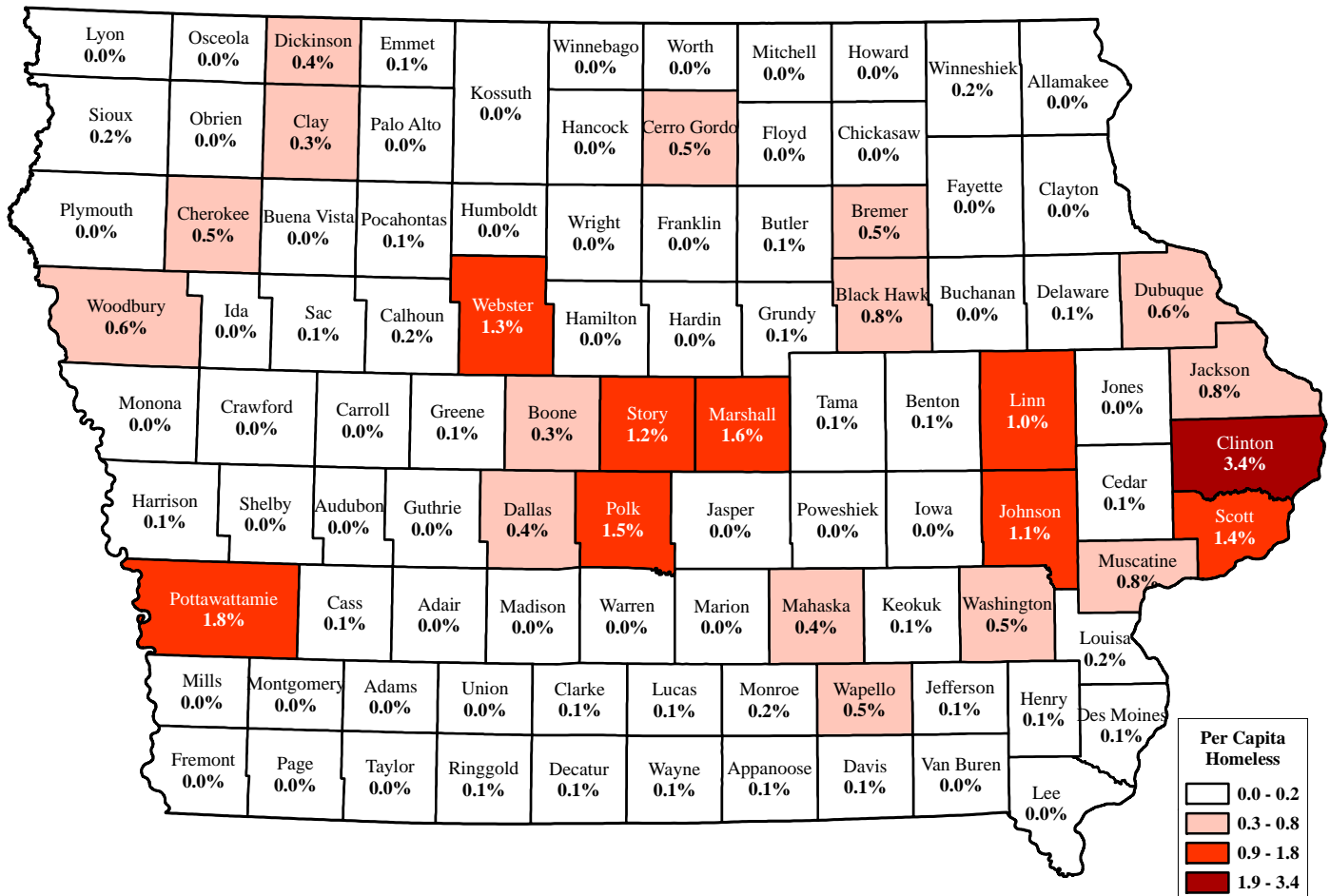


# 2005 Iowa Statewide Homeless Study

This study was commissioned by the Iowa Council on Homelessness, through the Iowa Finance Authority. Established by an Executive Order issued by Governor Thomas J. Vilsack in 2003, the Council is assigned with the mission of identifying causes and effects of homelessness in Iowa, developing recommendations to address homelessness, and fostering greater awareness among policymakers and the general public. The process of conducting this study and the information provided in this report are important steps in fulfilling the Council's mission.



January 2006

## Project Staff

**Elaine Ditsler** is a research associate with the Iowa Policy Project. Her research focuses on state budget and tax policy, especially with regards to its impact on low- and middle-income Iowans. She is also a co-author of *The State of Working Iowa*. Elaine holds a MS in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Iowa.

**Peter Fisher**, Research Director with the Iowa Policy Project, holds a doctorate in economics from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, specializing in labor economics and public finance. Peter has been a consultant to the State of Ohio and to the Iowa Department of Economic Development on taxes and economic development. His recent book *Grading Places: What Do the Business Climate Rankings Really Tell Us?* was published by the Economic Policy Institute. He is professor and former chair of the Graduate Program in Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Iowa.

**Heather MacDonald**, consultant to this project, holds a Ph.D. in Urban and Regional Planning from Rutgers University. Heather is currently an associate professor in the Graduate Program in Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Iowa, where she has been teaching since 1990. Heather authored the previous statewide study *Iowa's Homeless Population: 1999 Estimates and Profile*, two statewide housing needs assessments in 2000 and 2003, and numerous other reports on housing and homelessness over the last decade.

**Sarah Walz** served as a research associate with the Iowa Policy Project during most the duration of this project. Sarah holds an MA in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Iowa. She now works with the Iowa City Department of Planning and Community Development.

## Acknowledgements

We'd like to thank all the members of the Iowa Council on Homelessness who provided the vision and funding for this study, and who work so hard on this issue day in and day out:

Al Axeen	Ann Hearn	Kate Ridge
Virginia Beane	Bill Holvoet	Steffani Simbric
Bill Brand	Douglas Keast	Kevin Squires
Anne Brown	Anne Kinzel	Judy Songer
Christina M. Canganelli	Amy Knudsen	Janell Staats
Amy Correia	Gordon Miller	Nicki Stajcar
Kelli Foltz	Alice Mollet	Lila Starr
Diane Foss	Ray Morley	Bob Steben
Jeff Gronstal	Patrick Nestvedt	Donald Tyne
Mario Hayslett	Loyd Ogle	Dean Wright

This report would not have been possible without the cooperation of the 1,675 agencies and schools who responded to the survey. In addition, 371 school district liaisons (in 367 different school districts), eight DHS field managers, and nine Community Action Agency directors shepherded surveys to schools and local offices and provided follow-up to ensure that surveys were returned in a timely manner. Their time and effort was essential to the success of this study and we are grateful to them.

We also received assistance from many people in designing and distributing surveys and gathering the data reported here. We would like to single out the following individuals for special acknowledgement:

- Lyle Schwery, Homeless Programs Coordinator for the Iowa Finance Authority, coordinated meetings and helped us to announce the survey to the many agencies that participated.
- David Eberbach and the rest of the staff at the Iowa Institute for Community of Alliances provided essential data from Service Point and guidance in analyzing that data.
- At the Iowa Department of Education, Ray Morley, Shawn Snyder, Betsy Lundy and Coleen McClanahan provided data from Project EASIER and answered our numerous questions.
- Nicki Stajcar of the Department of Elder Affairs provided advice on how best to survey the agencies who work with the Area Agencies on Aging.
- Lila Starr from the Department of Human Services provided valuable help in designing the survey, especially so as to improve data collection on disabilities, mental illness and substance abuse.
- Vicki McInro from the Field Operations Unit of the Department of Human services provided invaluable advice and assistance in getting the surveys out to the various county offices.

We are also very grateful to the following people who helped with data entry and mailing: Ben Earnhart, Tracy Glaesemann, Karl Catlin, Ellen Ireland, Kelly Hein, Abby Attoun, Suzanne Gleeson, Teresa Galluzzo and Mike Owen.

## Table of Contents

<i>Executive Summary</i> .....	5
<b>Count</b> .....	6
<b>Demographics</b> .....	6
<b>Beyond Demographics</b> .....	6
<b>Service Provider Assessments</b> .....	7
<i>Chapter 1. Introduction</i> .....	8
<i>Chapter 2. The Count</i> .....	9
<b>Homeless Students in Iowa’s K-12 Public School Districts</b> .....	10
<b>The Geography of Homelessness in Iowa</b> .....	12
<i>Chapter 3. Demographics</i> .....	16
<b>Gender</b> .....	16
<b>Race/ Ethnicity</b> .....	17
<b>Age</b> .....	18
<b>Household Composition</b> .....	19
<i>Chapter 4. Beyond Demographics</i> .....	20
<b>Household Circumstances</b> .....	20
<b>Household Sources of Income and Benefits</b> .....	21
<b>Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Disabilities</b> .....	21
Among Homeless Adults .....	21
Among Homeless School Children .....	22
<b>Chronic Homelessness</b> .....	22
<b>Health Insurance and Veteran Status</b> .....	23
<b>Employment</b> .....	24
<b>Education and School Attendance</b> .....	25
<i>Chapter 5. Service Provider Assessments</i> .....	26
<b>Demand for Services</b> .....	26
Shelter Bed Capacity .....	27
<b>Assistance Located by Sheriffs, VAs, Area Agencies on Aging, and Free Medical Clinics</b> .....	28
<b>Factors that Contribute to Homelessness</b> .....	29
<b>Barriers to Resolving Homelessness</b> .....	30
<b>Enrollment Barriers and Educational Services for Homeless School Children</b> .....	31
<i>Chapter 6. Implications for Policy</i> .....	34
<i>Endnotes</i> .....	35
<i>Appendix I</i>	

*Appendix II is in a separate file available at [www.iowapolicyproject.org](http://www.iowapolicyproject.org)*

## Executive Summary

Just over 21,000 Iowans were homeless during 2005, an increase of 2,688 people since 1999. The homeless population was largely concentrated in Iowa’s most urban counties. In Polk County, which had the largest homeless population, 6,008 Iowans were living in shelters, transitional housing, on the streets or in other places not designed for human habitation. Scott County reported the second largest number of homeless (2,298), followed by Linn (1,875), Clinton (1,678) and Pottawattamie (1,594) counties. In twelve counties, all of which were among Iowa’s most populous counties, over 500 persons were homeless during 2005.

Clinton County reported the most homeless persons as a percentage of the total population (3.4 percent), followed by Pottawattamie (1.8 percent), Marshall (1.6 percent), Polk (1.5 percent) and Scott (1.4 percent).

For the first time, school districts reported information on homeless students (including students temporarily living doubled with family or friends) directly to the Department of Education. The Cedar Rapids Community School District reported the most homeless students (550), followed by Des Moines Independent (523), Council Bluffs (447), Davenport (317), and Sioux City (223).

West Sioux Community School District had by far the highest percentage of homeless students at 12.8 percent of total enrollment. In three other school districts, homeless students represented over 5 percent of total enrollment (Allison-Bristow, Perry and Moulten-Udell).

In Iowa, as in the nation, the composition of the homeless population is changing. Families with children now make up the majority of all homeless households in Iowa. Reflecting this shift, women are more likely than men to be homeless and minority groups (who are more likely to have children) have increased as a share of the homeless population. In particular, African-Americans are significantly over-represented in Iowa’s homeless population. While making up only two percent of the state population, black Iowans make up almost one-quarter of the homeless.

About 40 percent of homeless persons had a mental health problem, substance abuse problem or some other disability. However, the economic mismatch between earnings and housing costs appears to be of overwhelming significance. Homeless households and service providers concurred that domestic violence, unemployment, low-wage work, and the inability to find affordable housing were the most significant factors contributing to homelessness.

While targeted efforts to improve supportive services to people with health problems and to families (especially victims of domestic violence) are important, without adequate wages and affordable housing, the impact of these improvements *in reducing homelessness* may be limited. While striving to remove these structural barriers to resolving homelessness, more shelter beds and transitional housing are needed in the near term to provide for the increasing numbers of homeless Iowans.

Counties with over 500 Homeless People

County	Annualized Count	Per Capita Homeless
Polk	6,008	1.5%
Scott	2,298	1.4%
Linn	1,875	1.0%
Clinton	1,678	3.4%
Pottawattamie	1,594	1.8%
Johnson	1,257	1.1%
Story	966	1.2%
Black Hawk	957	0.8%
Woodbury	656	0.6%
Marshall	646	1.6%
Dubuque	552	0.6%
Webster	516	1.3%

Note: Population estimates as of July 1, 2004 from the Population Division, U.S. Census

Next, we present a summary of the major findings from each chapter:

## Count

- About 21,280 Iowans were homeless at some point during 2005, an increase of 2,688 people since 1999. This increase is likely related to the recession that ensued in 2001 and the continued weakness in the labor market since then. In 2005, the unemployment rate was almost double the rate of 1999 and 35,000 more Iowans were unemployed.
- The Cedar Rapids Community School District reported the most homeless students with 550. Des Moines Independent was a close second with 523, then Council Bluffs (447), Davenport (317), and Sioux City (223).
- West Sioux Community School District had by far the highest percentage of homeless students at 12.8 percent. In three other school districts (Allison-Bristow, Perry, and Moulten-Udell), homeless students represented over 5 percent of total enrollment.
- Twelve counties had over 500 homeless persons during 2005. Polk County had almost three times more homeless persons (6,008) than the county with the second highest number of homeless, Scott County (2,298). Linn (1,875), Clinton (1,678) and Pottawattamie (1,594) rounded out the top five counties.
- Clinton County had by far the highest percentage of homeless people at 3.4 percent. Pottawattamie (1.8%), Marshall (1.6%), Polk (1.5%) and Scott (1.4%) had the next highest percentages.

## Demographics

- Women are more likely than men to be homeless (56 percent versus 44 percent), especially among the African-American population and in rural and low poverty counties.
- African-Americans are significantly over-represented in Iowa's homeless population. While black Iowans make up only two percent of the state population, they make up almost one-quarter of the homeless.
- The majority of homeless African-Americans and Hispanic households have children compared to only 36 percent of white, homeless households.
- Homelessness is overwhelmingly white in rural areas. As urbanization levels increase, the percentage of the homeless who are African-American dramatically increases.
- Families with children make up the majority (61 percent) of all homeless households in Iowa.

## Beyond Demographics

- One-fifth or more of all homeless households reported the following four circumstances leading up to or during their current episode of homelessness: The inability to find affordable housing, the closely related factor of eviction or foreclosure, domestic violence, and loss of employment (or continued unemployment).
- About 40 percent of homeless adults and 40 percent of school children had a mental health problem (a serious emotional disorder for school children), a substance abuse problem, or some other disability.
- About seven percent of Iowa's homeless meet the HUD definition for being chronically homeless.
- Almost one-fifth of homeless men in Iowa are veterans.
- The vast majority of homeless people are either uninsured (44 percent) or covered by Medicaid (43 percent). Homeless children are far more likely to be insured (usually through Medicaid) than adults.

- About one-third of homeless adults were employed during the reference week and about half of them worked more than 30 hours per week.
- Sixty percent of the homeless population over 24 years of age have no schooling beyond high school and only one percent has a college diploma.

### **Service Provider Assessments**

- During the first quarter of 2005, about half of shelters served the same number of homeless clients and half served more homeless clients compared to the same period in 2004.
- 765 homeless people were turned away from shelters during the two-week study period because of a lack of space. Existing service capacity is especially inadequate in large metropolitan areas.
- Family breakup was perceived as the most significant factor contributing to homelessness across Iowa, just as it was in 1999.
- Substance abuse was the top ranked factor in rural counties and ranked second overall.
- The inability to find affordable housing and unemployment/job loss were also very significant factors, especially in metropolitan areas.
- The lack of living wage jobs and affordable housing were seen as the most significant barriers to resolving homelessness across Iowa.
- Improving access to health and counseling services (family/ domestic violence counseling, mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and medical services) were also seen as important strategies for resolving homelessness, especially in rural and metropolitan counties.
- Parental involvement was seen as the most significant barrier to improving enrollment and school attendance among homeless children, and parent training and involvement is the educational service most in need of improvement.
- Medical care, child care (for students with children or siblings to care for), better coordination between schools and other agencies, and staff development/ training were additional educational services in need of improvement.

## Chapter 1. Introduction

This report aims to provide accurate and current information on the homeless population in Iowa, and to estimate the number of people who were homeless at some point during 2005. This study was conducted on behalf of the Iowa Council on Homelessness to meet specific data needs of state agencies concerned with homelessness. Detailed information on the characteristics of people who were near homeless in Iowa during 2005 is provided as well. This 2005 Iowa Statewide Homeless Study builds upon previous research completed in 1999 and 2003. We hope the findings in this report will inform policy-makers, planners, agencies and service providers, and others who work on homeless issues in Iowa.

This study relied on three different sources of data: The Homeless Management Information System (henceforth, called Service Point), surveys administered by the authors of this report (Iowa Policy Project staff), and the Project Easier database from the Iowa Department of Education. The homeless count relied on responses from homeless shelters, transitional housing programs, schools, community action agencies, county Department of Human Services (DHS) offices, county General Assistance (GA) offices, community mental health clinics, Head Start programs, and a variety of homeless prevention agencies. Perceptions of the homeless population were also collected from sheriff departments, county Veteran Affairs (VA) offices, Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) and free medical clinics.

The goals of this report are to:

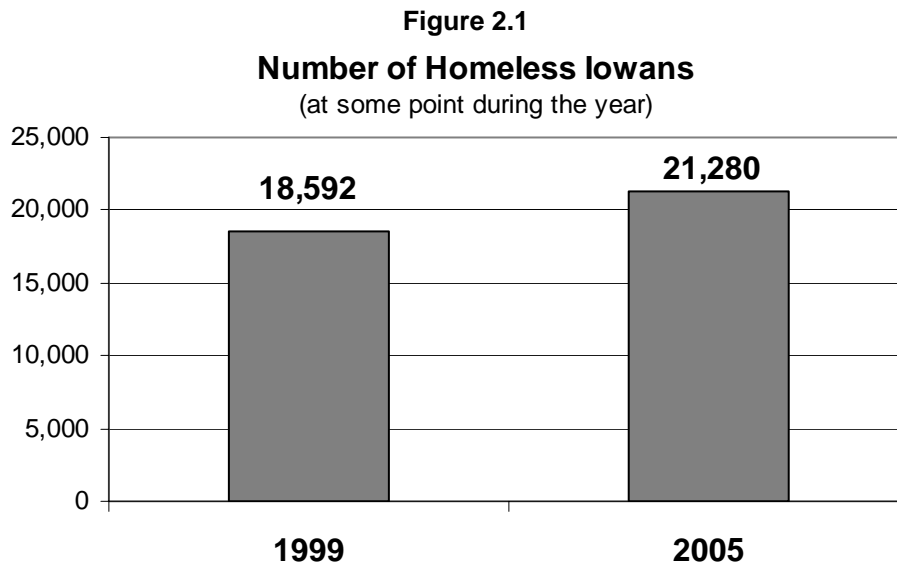
1. Estimate the size of the homeless population in Iowa during 2005 and identify trends in the number of homeless Iowans since 1999.
2. Provide basic demographic information, such as race, ethnicity, gender, and household composition, for Iowa's homeless and near homeless populations.
3. Provide information on educational level, employment status, health insurance status, health problems, income/ benefit sources, veteran status, and disabilities of homeless and near homeless populations.
4. Identify factors contributing to homelessness in the community and in the household.
5. Estimate the percentage of Iowa's homeless population that is "chronically homeless."
6. Identify the educational barriers and needs of homeless students (Pre-K through 12).
7. Identify the major barriers to resolving homelessness in Iowa communities.

## Chapter 2. The Count

In most cases, homelessness is a temporary circumstance, not a permanent condition.<sup>1</sup> In order to reflect the fluidity with which people move in and out of homelessness, our study provides estimates of the number of Iowans who experienced homelessness *at some point during 2005*.

As with any survey of homelessness, there are limitations to our study. By relying on a survey of service providers, we missed those homeless individuals and families who did not access services during the study period. In addition, some homeless people would not be counted if they accessed services from an agency that did not respond to our survey. However, our high response rates give us confidence that non-respondents do not significantly affect our estimates (see Appendix I for response rates and detailed information on data collection).<sup>2</sup>

We estimate that 21,280 Iowans were homeless at some point during 2005 (Figure 2.1).<sup>3,4</sup> This is an increase of about 2,688 people since 1999. However, due to some differences in data sources, survey design and methodology, the studies are not perfectly comparable.<sup>5</sup> Still, it is useful to put the 2005 figure in context by providing the official figure from the 1999 Iowa Statewide Homeless Study. More information on trends since 1999 is presented in the profiles sections of the report.



This estimate of 21,280 homeless Iowans is based on a conservative definition of homelessness, which excludes individuals temporarily living doubled up with relatives or friends. These estimates also assume that all school-age children reported by shelters and other agencies were already included in counts from the Department of Education’s Project Easier data. Homeless people identified on housing waiting lists were also not counted because of the difficulty of ensuring that their homeless situation had not changed. Finally, individuals who did not provide enough information to ensure they were not duplicated elsewhere (the “anonymous”) were also excluded from the final count in order to provide a conservative estimate.<sup>6</sup> Appendix I provides a detailed description of the methodology used to develop these estimates as well as a table with the raw counts.

### **How do we Define Homelessness?**

For the official count of homelessness, we use the most conservative definition based on guidance from the Department of Housing and Urban Development:

1. A person without fixed, regular and adequate nighttime shelter;
2. A person whose primary nighttime residence is:
  - A supervised shelter designed to provide temporary accommodations (such as congregate shelter or transitional housing);
  - A public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping place for human beings (such as a car, camper, abandoned building, barn or street).

*For the demographic and other profiles of homeless people presented later, we broaden our definition of homelessness to include people temporarily living doubled up with family or friends.*

### **How do we Define Near-Homelessness?**

1. A person or household in imminent danger of eviction;
2. A person or household in imminent danger of having their utilities disconnected; or
3. A person or household seeking housing assistance, AND paying more than 50% of their income for housing.

### **Homeless Students in Iowa's K-12 Public School Districts**

Included in the statewide estimate of homeless people were 2,259 K-12 school students. However, the Department of Education also considers people living doubled with family or friends for a temporary period to be homeless. Using this definition, an additional 2,398 students were homeless, bringing the total number of homeless students during the 2004-2005 school year to 4,657 school students.

In 21 school districts, 50 or more homeless students were reported during the 2004-05 school year (Table 2.1). The Cedar Rapids Community School District reported the most homeless students with 550. Des Moines Independent was a close second with 523, then Council Bluffs with 447. Homeless students were reported by a total of 145 school districts (the remaining 222 school districts reported 0 homeless students). Appendix I provides a complete breakdown of the number of homeless students for each school district.

**Table 2.1**

School Districts Reporting over 50 Homeless Students, 2004-2005 school year

District Name	HUD Definition of		Total (DE)	Per Capita (Total Homeless / Enrollment)
	Homeless	Doubled Up		
Cedar Rapids Comm School District	212	338	550	3.2%
Des Moines Independent Comm School Dist	191	332	523	1.6%
Council Bluffs Comm School District	447	0	447	4.8%
Davenport Comm School District	147	170	317	2.0%
Sioux City Comm School District	100	123	223	1.7%
Clinton Comm School District	62	144	206	4.8%
Ottumwa Comm School District	73	104	177	3.8%
Ames Comm School District	124	23	147	3.3%
Perry Comm School District	32	86	118	6.6%
Marshalltown Comm School District	25	87	112	2.3%
Waterloo Comm School District	49	58	107	1.0%
Bettendorf Comm School District	40	58	98	2.3%
West Sioux Comm School District	33	55	88	12.8%
Southeast Polk Comm School District	8	75	83	1.7%
College Comm School District	50	29	79	2.0%
Oskaloosa Comm School District	68	2	70	3.0%
Iowa City Comm School District	53	16	69	0.6%
Fort Dodge Comm School District	34	30	64	1.6%
Dubuque Comm School District	14	47	61	0.6%
Oelwein Comm School District	3	58	61	4.6%
Columbus Comm School District	8	43	51	4.9%

Notes: The Department of Education (DE) definition for homelessness includes students living temporarily doubled up with family or friends. If the type of homelessness was unknown, the student was assumed not to be living doubled up. Enrollment figures include Pre-K students.

In 27 school districts, the homeless population made up 2 percent or more of total enrollment (Table 2.2). West Sioux Community School District in Sioux county has far more homeless on a per capita basis (12.8 percent) than other school districts. Among the top five, West Sioux, Allison-Bristow, and Moulton-Udell are small school districts, while Perry and Columbus are close to average size (1300 students). Many large school districts also have large per capita numbers, including Council Bluffs, Cedar Rapids and Davenport.

**Table 2.2**  
School Districts Reporting over 2% of Students as Homeless, 2004-2005 school year

District Name	HUD Definition of		Total (DE)	Per Capita (Total Homeless / Enrollment)
	Homeless	Doubled Up		
West Sioux Comm School District	33	55	88	12.8%
Allison-Bristow Comm School District	12	8	20	6.9%
Perry Comm School District	32	86	118	6.6%
Moulton-Udell Comm School District	11	3	14	5.3%
Columbus Comm School District	8	43	51	4.9%
Clinton Comm School District	62	144	206	4.8%
Council Bluffs Comm School District	447	0	447	4.8%
Hubbard-Radcliffe Comm School District	2	19	21	4.7%
Oelwein Comm School District	3	58	61	4.6%
West Harrison Comm School District	3	19	22	4.2%
Lawton-Bronson Comm School District	11	12	23	3.8%
Ottumwa Comm School District	73	104	177	3.8%
Spirit Lake Comm School District	37	8	45	3.4%
Ames Comm School District	124	23	147	3.3%
Cedar Rapids Comm School District	212	338	550	3.2%
Oskaloosa Comm School District	68	2	70	3.0%
Albia Comm School District	11	23	34	2.8%
East Marshall Comm School District	7	14	21	2.6%
Tri-County Comm School District	0	8	8	2.4%
Estherville Lincoln Central Com Sch Dist	15	16	31	2.4%
Belle Plaine Comm School District	5	10	15	2.3%
Marshalltown Comm School District	25	87	112	2.3%
Bettendorf Comm School District	40	58	98	2.3%
North Iowa Comm School District	4	9	13	2.2%
College Comm School District	50	29	79	2.0%
Pocahontas Area Comm School District	6	7	13	2.0%
Davenport Comm School District	147	170	317	2.0%

Notes: The Department of Education (DE) definition for homelessness includes students living temporarily doubled up with family or friends. If the type of homelessness was unknown, the student was assumed not to be living doubled up. Enrollment figures include Pre-K students.

## The Geography of Homelessness in Iowa

There are inherent problems in assigning homeless people to any one geographic location, especially in a rural, sparsely populated state like Iowa. Homeless people, especially those in rural areas where services are scarce, must often travel to another county to access services. In those cases, our survey would count them in the county where services were accessed. Thus, the county estimates presented below are best interpreted as the number of homeless individuals who accessed services in a given county rather than the number actually living in that county.<sup>7</sup>

Twelve counties had over 500 homeless persons during the year (Table 2.3). Polk County had almost three times more homeless persons (6,008) than the county with the second highest number of homeless, Scott County (2,298). Linn, Clinton and Pottawattamie rounded out the top five counties. On a per capita basis, Clinton County by far had the highest percentage of homeless at 3.4 percent. Pottawattamie, Marshall, Polk and Scott had the next highest percentages. Appendix I provides a table with this information for all counties (listed in alphabetical order by county).

**Table 2.3**  
Counties with over 500 Homeless People

County	Annualized Count	Per Capita Homeless
Polk	6,008	1.5%
Scott	2,298	1.4%
Linn	1,875	1.0%
Clinton	1,678	3.4%
Pottawattamie	1,594	1.8%
Johnson	1,257	1.1%
Story	966	1.2%
Black Hawk	957	0.8%
Woodbury	656	0.6%
Marshall	646	1.6%
Dubuque	552	0.6%
Webster	516	1.3%

Note: Population estimates as of July 1, 2004 from the Population Division, U.S. Census

In the maps on the next pages (Figures 2.2 and 2.3), we present annualized estimates of homelessness in every county. In order to provide more relevant comparisons between different size counties, per capita homeless rates are also presented. Counties are shaded to allow easy comparisons between counties of different urbanization and poverty levels.

#### Definitions for County Groups (and number of counties falling in that category)

- Rural:** Counties containing no towns of more than 2,500 people (17)  
**Small Urban:** Counties where the largest town has a population between 2,500 and 10,000 (46)  
**Micropolitan:** Counties where the largest city has a population between 10,000 and 50,000 (17)  
**Metropolitan:** Counties containing a city with a population of more than 50,000 (19)
- Low Poverty:** Counties with a 7.5% or lower poverty rate (23)  
**Medium Poverty:** Counties with a poverty rate between 7.6% and 10.4% (52)  
**High Poverty:** Counties with a 10.5% or higher poverty rate (24)

Source: 2000 Census of Population and Housing

Figure 2.2 Number of Homeless and Per Capita Homelessness in Each County, by Urbanization Level

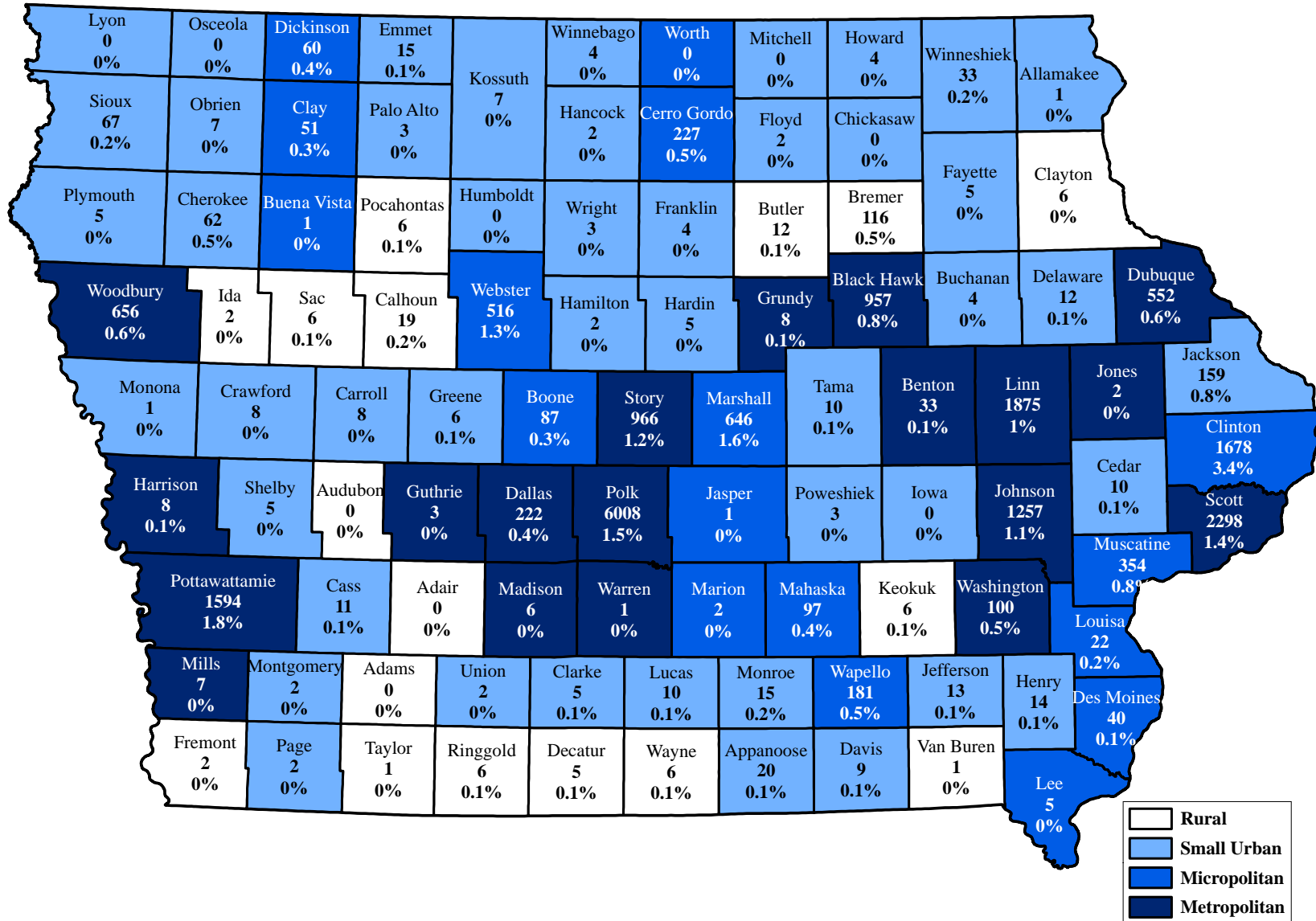
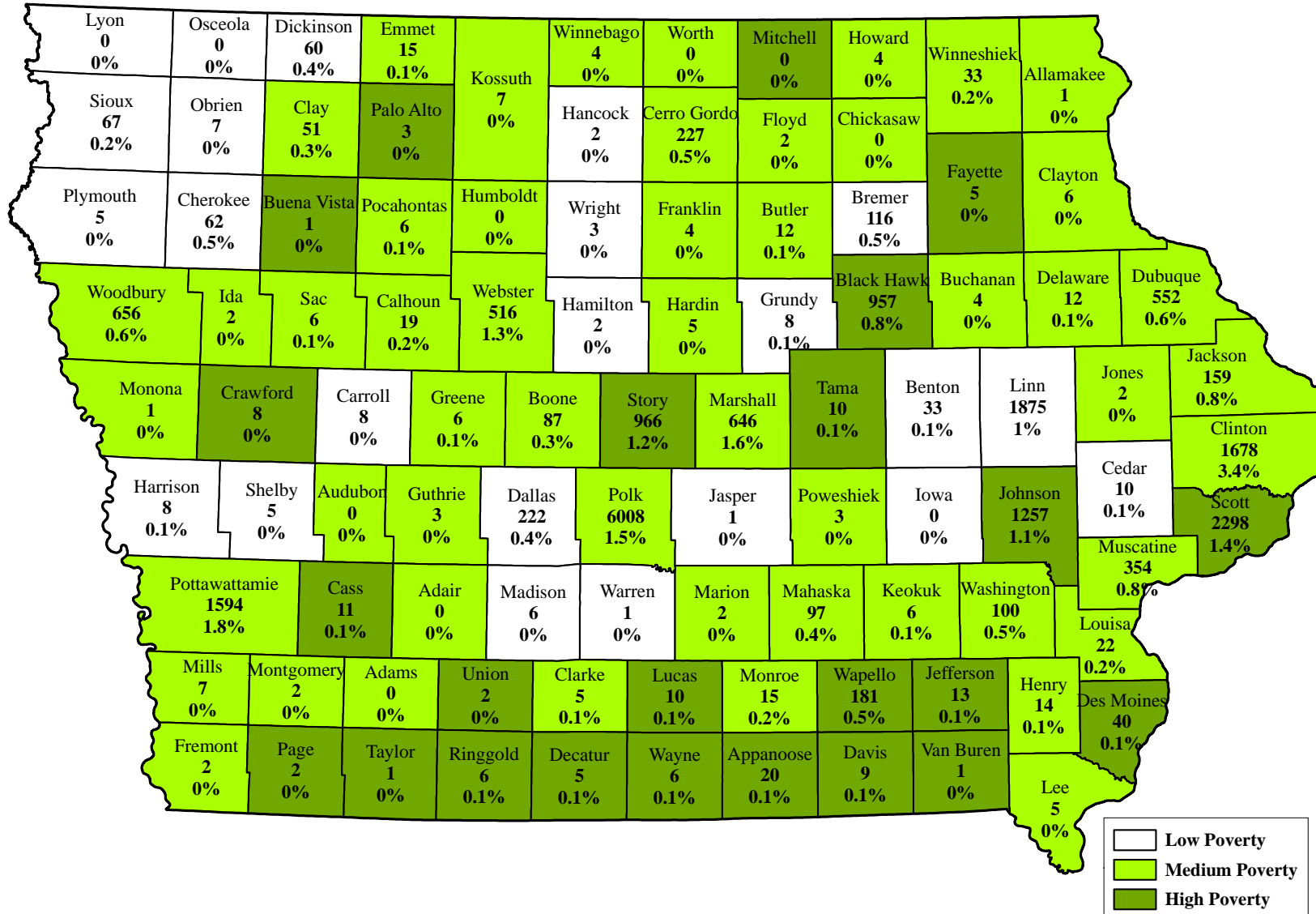


Figure 2.3 Number of Homeless and Per Capita Homelessness in Each County, by Poverty Level



## Chapter 3. Demographics

To many people, the idea of homelessness conjures up the image of a single man down on his luck living on the streets or in a shelter. For others, particularly those in a more urban setting, homelessness is often synonymous with mental illness or drug and alcohol abuse. Again, the image of people sleeping on park benches, alleys, or other public spaces comes to mind.

A complete and accurate portrait of homelessness shows the problem is more complicated and affects whole families, women and children, working people, and the disabled. Some individuals and families may be homeless for only days while others struggle for months to find permanent shelter. Some will experience homelessness only once or intermittently as their financial situations change or the economy fluctuates. For others, homelessness may be a chronic situation.

Before going forward, some caveats and further explanation of the data are required. In Chapters 3 and 4, the universe of homeless individuals is expanded beyond those included in the official count. That count offered our most conservative estimate of the number of homeless people, which assumed all school-age children reported by agencies other than K-12 public schools and all “anonymous” people were already duplicated elsewhere. In addition, homeless people on housing waiting lists and temporarily living doubled up with relatives were excluded. However, we included the reported characteristics of these individuals in our construction of descriptive profiles. The reader should also bear in mind that schools reported data on all students who were homeless over the school year while other agencies reported data only for individuals served during a two- to four-week study period. Consequently, proportionately more children are represented in the demographic profiles than is the case for the homeless population over the entire year. For these reasons and because it often makes more sense, adults and children are often analyzed separately in Chapters 3 and 4.

So, who is homeless? Next, we present some of the basic demographic characteristics of Iowa’s homeless population.

### Gender

Women make up the majority (56 percent) of Iowa’s adult homeless population, and their share has grown since 1999 when they made up about 52 percent of the homeless population. This reflects a shift nationwide where families are now the fastest growing segment of the homeless population. In less urbanized and lower poverty counties, women make up an even larger share of the adult homeless population (Tables 3.1 – 3.3).

**Table 3.1**  
Gender of Homeless and Near Homeless (NH) Iowans

	Adults		Children		All	
	Homeless	NH	Homeless	NH	Homeless	NH
Female	56%	68%	49%	49%	52%	60%
Male	44%	32%	51%	51%	48%	40%

Notes: "Children" are defined here as under 19 years old **OR** still in high school.

**Table 3.2**  
Homeless Adults by County Urbanization and Gender

	Rural	Small Urban	Micropolitan	Metropolitan
Female	<b>73%</b>	<b>65%</b>	51%	56%
Male	27%	35%	49%	44%

**Table 3.3**  
Homeless Adults by County Poverty and Gender

	Low poverty	Medium poverty	High poverty
Female	<b>73%</b>	49%	55%
Male	27%	51%	45%

**Race/ Ethnicity**

White Iowans, who constitute 90 percent of the state’s population, account for only 61 percent of Iowa’s homeless population (Table 3.4). Although whites constitute the majority of the homeless, black Iowans are significantly over-represented in the homeless population. African-Americans make up only 2 percent of the state’s population, yet account for 24 percent of the homeless. Hispanics are also over-represented in Iowa’s homeless population (especially among homeless children).

Since 1999, there has been a significant change in the racial composition of Iowa’s homeless population. Six years ago, whites accounted for 68 percent of homeless Iowans and African-Americans accounted for 18 percent.

**Table 3.4**  
Race/ Ethnicity of Homeless and Near-Homeless (NH) Iowans

	Percent of IA Population	Adults		Children		All	
		Homeless	NH	Homeless	NH	Homeless	NH
White	90%	68%	65%	58%	53%	61%	59%
African-American	<b>2%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>32%</b>
Hispanic	5%	5%	4%	13%	5%	10%	4%
Native American	0%	2%	1%	3%	1%	2%	1%
Asian	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Other/Two or More Races	1%	1%	2%	1%	5%	1%	3%

Notes: "Children" are defined here as under 19 years old **OR** still in high school.

A slightly higher percentage of homeless African-American adults are female compared to whites and Hispanics (Table 3.5). The majority of homeless African-American and Hispanic households have children in the household whereas only 36 percent of white homeless households have children (Table 3.6).

**Table 3.5**  
Share of Homeless Adults Who are Female, by Race

White	54%
African-American	<b>60%</b>
Hispanic	55%

**Table 3.6**  
Share of Homeless Households with Children, by Race

White	36%
African-American	<b>53%</b>
Hispanic	<b>51%</b>

In rural and small urban counties, whites make up over 90 percent of the homeless population. In more urban counties, African-Americans make up a larger share of the homeless population (Table 3.7).

**Table 3.7**  
Race/ Ethnicity of Homeless Adults by County Urbanization

	Rural	Small Urban	Micropolitan	Metropolitan
White	92%	95%	84%	64%
African-American	0%	0%	7%	27%
Hispanic	2%	3%	6%	6%

Note: Totals may not add up to 100 because of a small percentage of people reporting other races.

In medium poverty counties, whites make up the vast majority of the homeless population. African-Americans are more likely to be homeless in low poverty and high poverty counties (Table 3.8).

**Table 3.8**  
Race/ Ethnicity of Homeless Adults by County Poverty

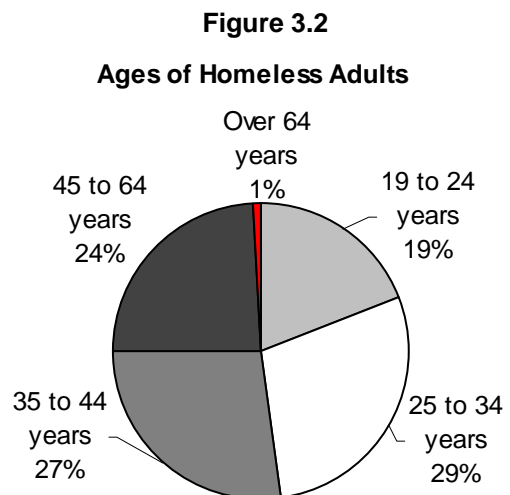
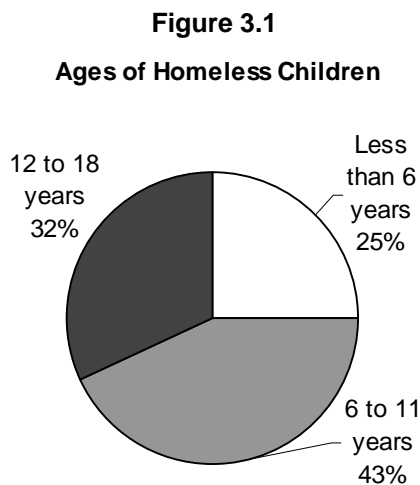
	Low poverty	Medium poverty	High poverty
White	59%	77%	58%
African-American	31%	13%	34%
Hispanic	6%	5%	5%

Note: Totals may not add up to 100 because of a small percentage of people reporting other races.

### Age

As discussed earlier, children are likely to be over-represented in the profiles. On the other hand, children are almost certainly under-represented in the count because we had to assume that all school-aged children reported by shelters were already counted by the schools. Thus, only 30 percent of the 21,280 homeless Iowans in the official count were children. The actual percentage of children is probably closer to 50 percent, as found in the 1999 Iowa Homeless study.<sup>8</sup> In the next section on household composition, we find other evidence that children are a growing share of the homeless population.

In order to avoid the pitfalls of over- or under-representing children, we break down the ages of homeless children and adults separately (Figures 3.1 and 3.2). Children were more likely to be homeless in their middle-aged years (6 to 11 years) and about three-quarters of homeless adults were quite young at less than 45 years.

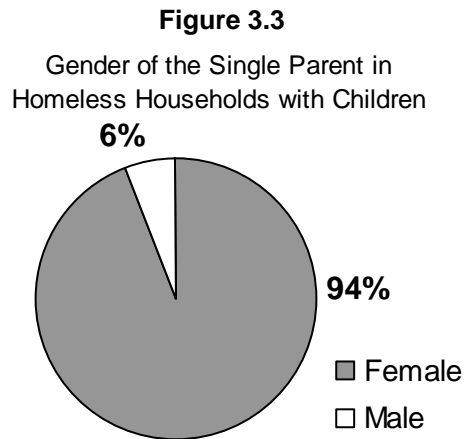


### Household Composition

Families with children make up the majority—61 percent—of all homeless households in Iowa, up from 58 percent of all households in 1999 (Table 3.9). Single parent households constitute 45 percent of all homeless households, and in 94 percent of cases, the single adult in the family is female (Figure 3.3). Two-parent/ adult households are not immune from homelessness, however. These families make up 16 percent of homeless households in Iowa. Only 27 percent of homeless households are made up of single adults, and men make up the majority (66 percent) of these homeless people.

**Table 3.9**  
Distribution of People by Types of Household

	Homeless	NH
Single adult	27%	20%
Two adults	2%	3%
Single adult with children	<b>45%</b>	<b>45%</b>
Two adults with children	16%	21%
Unaccompanied Child	3%	2%
Other	7%	10%



## Chapter 4. Beyond Demographics

The circumstances that lead to homelessness are social, economic and personal. For a single family or individual, there is usually a multi-tiered explanation for homelessness:<sup>9</sup>

- The precipitating cause (e.g. eviction/foreclosure)
- The underlying cause (e.g. loss of job or benefits, family break up, institutionalization of family member)
- Personal circumstances or limiting factors that frequently go underreported (e.g. substance abuse, mental health, domestic violence)

Determining the root cause of homelessness can be difficult to do through surveys. Some respondents may mention only the precipitating cause, rather than the underlying cause or personal circumstance. In this section of the report, we present data on the causes and circumstances leading to homelessness as reported by homeless individuals. We also present information on other characteristics such as mental health and disabilities that may not be reported as causes for homelessness, but which may play a role.

### Household Circumstances

The most commonly reported experience among all homeless households is the inability to find affordable housing (Table 4.1). The next most common experiences are eviction/foreclosure (which is certainly related to the first experience), domestic violence, unemployment and utility disconnection. Substance abuse and family illness are also problems for more than one in ten homeless families. Family break up was reported in only nine percent of households, yet as we show later, homeless service providers ranked this as the top factor contributing to homelessness in Iowa. This may be an example of how the precipitating cause (eviction or inability to find affordable housing) is more likely to be reported than the underlying cause (family breakup). Appendix I provides similar information on near-homeless households.

**Table 4.1**

Household Circumstances among the Homeless	
Unable to find affordable housing*	32%
Eviction/ foreclosure	26%
Domestic violence	24%
Loss of employment income/ unemployment	20%
Utility disconnection*	15%
Substance abuse/ addiction	15%
Physical or mental illness/disability in family	13%
Family break up/ divorce/ runaway	9%
Loss of benefits*	8%
Institutionalization of family member (jail, hospital)	5%
De-institutionalization (jail, hospital, foster care)	4%
Unknown*	4%
Other	20%

Notes: Service Point only recorded the primary and secondary reasons for homelessness. IPP survey respondents selected all applicable. \* indicates choices only available in IPP survey.

### Household Sources of Income and Benefits

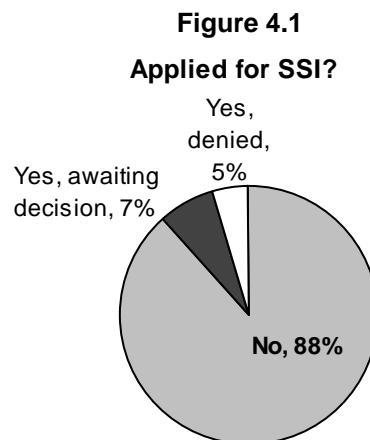
Almost one-quarter of homeless and near-homeless households rely on employment income (Table 4.2). The next most commonly reported sources were TANF and supplemental security income; although less than 10 percent of homeless households reported income from these sources.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 4.2**  
Source of Income and Benefits Among Households

	Homeless	NH
Employment income	22%	26%
TANF/ TANF services	9%	11%
Supplemental security income	8%	13%
General assistance	5%	4%
Social security disability income	5%	6%
Child support	4%	4%
Other	16%	21%

Note: Sources had to have been received in the past month. "Other" primarily included food stamps, WIC and LIHEAP which are not technically considered income or benefits. Other could also include private pension, retirement disability, and Section 8.

The Iowa Policy Project survey also asked homeless individuals who were not receiving Supplemental Security Income whether they had applied for it. About 88 percent said they had not applied for SSI (Figure 4.1).



### Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Disabilities

Mental health problems impact the way a person thinks, behaves and interacts with other people. Some common examples of mental illness include depression, anxiety disorders, social phobias, and panic disorders. National studies have estimated the percentage of homeless people with a mental illness at between 20 and 40 percent. Studies have also found substance abuse (in particular alcohol abuse) to be an important factor contributing to homelessness, especially among men and runaway youth. Findings in this 2005 survey suggest that Iowa is similar to the nation in these areas.

#### Among Homeless Adults

Almost 40 percent of homeless adults and 30 percent of the near homeless have either a mental health problem, substance abuse problem or a disability (Table 4.3). Substance abuse and mental health problems were more common among the homeless than the near-homeless population. These figures

may understate the prevalence of mental health problems, which can be difficult to identify by homeless service providers who may not be trained to do so. To see the exact wording of our question and the definitions we provided, see the survey materials in Appendix II.

**Table 4.3**  
Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Disability Among Adults

	Homeless	NH
Mental Health Problem	19%	12%
Substance Abuse	16%	7%
Disability	18%	19%
Percentage with At Least One of the Above	37%	29%

Notes: A disability is a physical, developmental or other problem that is not temporary. Some types of disability include developmental, hearing impaired, HIV/AIDS, Alzhiemers/ Dementia, cognitive disability, learning disability, mental handicap or injury, speech disability, physical or medical disability, physical or mobility limits and vision impaired.

**Among Homeless School Children**

Although we obtained an overall count of homeless school children from the Project Easier database, we sampled 383 schools to gather more detailed information on the incidence of serious emotional disorders, substance abuse problems and disabilities among homeless school children. Information on 1,269 homeless students was reported. From this sample, we found that almost 30 percent of school children have a serious emotional disorder (Table 4.4). This is 50 percent higher than the share of homeless adults reported to have a mental health problem. It is unclear whether children are actually more likely to have a serious emotional disorder than adults or if school personnel are more capable of identifying these problems. About 63 percent of affected children received treatment for their emotional disorder.<sup>11</sup>

Less than 10 percent of children had a substance abuse problem, but among those that did, teachers and administrators were only sure that 30 percent received treatment.<sup>12</sup> About 23 percent of school children had a disability and 86 percent received benefits or services for that disability.<sup>13</sup> Overall, the percentage of children with a serious emotional disorder, substance abuse problem or disability was 41 percent.

**Table 4.4**  
Serious Emotional Disorders, Substance Abuse and Disability among Homeless School Children

Serious Emotional Disorder	29%
Substance Abuse Problem	9%
Disability	23%
Percentage with At Least One of the Above	41%

**Chronic Homelessness**

According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, a chronically homeless person is an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more or who has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. Furthermore, to be considered chronically homeless, the person must have been sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., living on the streets) and/or in an emergency shelter.

**About 7 percent of the homeless are chronically homeless**

Collecting all the necessary pieces of information to determine whether someone qualifies as chronically homeless is a challenging task. Data collected in Iowa Policy Project surveys suggests that about 7 percent of the state’s homeless population meets this definition. If families were included (and not just unaccompanied homeless individuals), the figure would be about 8 percent. According to data collected in Service Point, about 10 percent of the state’s homeless population is chronically homeless. An estimate that included families could not be derived from the Service Point data. The actual percentage is likely to be higher because disabilities may go unrecognized or because other necessary information for an individual is missing.<sup>14</sup>

### Health Insurance and Veteran Status

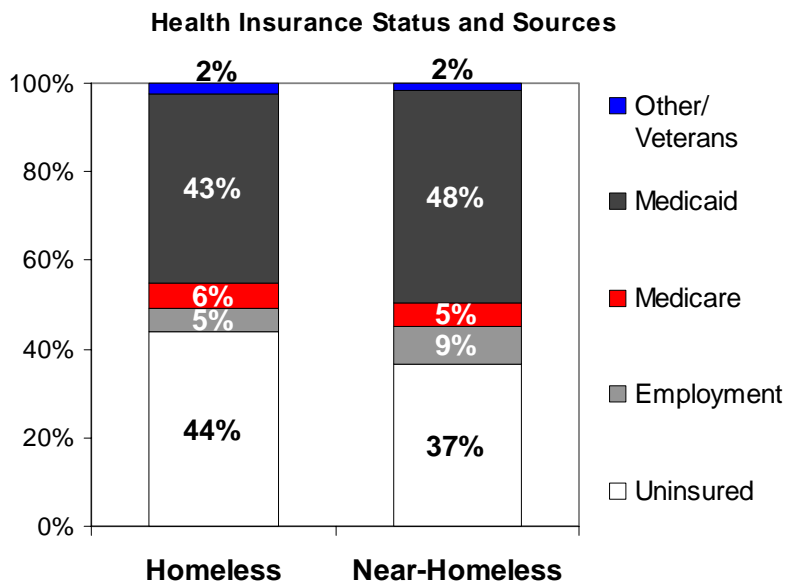
Information on health insurance was collected only by the Iowa Policy Project and information on veteran status was collected only by Service Point. According to Service Point data, about 19 percent of homeless men (over 18 years of age) are veterans.

***Almost one-fifth of homeless men in Iowa are veterans.***

According to Iowa Policy Project data, 44 percent of the homeless are uninsured (at any specific point in time) compared with 10 percent of all Iowans (Figure 4.2). About 50 percent of the homeless are covered by government-sponsored insurance (primarily Medicaid). In comparison, 25 percent of all Iowans are covered by government-sponsored insurance.<sup>15</sup>

While 58 percent of homeless adults are uninsured, only 18 percent of children are without coverage thanks to Medicaid and Hawk-I (Table 4.5). Nonetheless, 18 percent is three times higher than the 6 percent of all children in Iowa who are uninsured.<sup>16</sup>

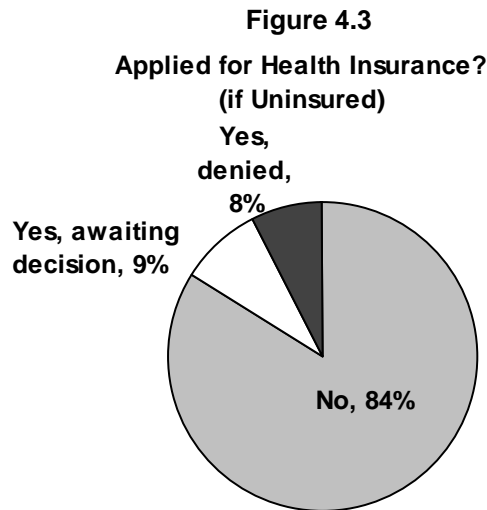
**Figure 4.2**



**Table 4.5**

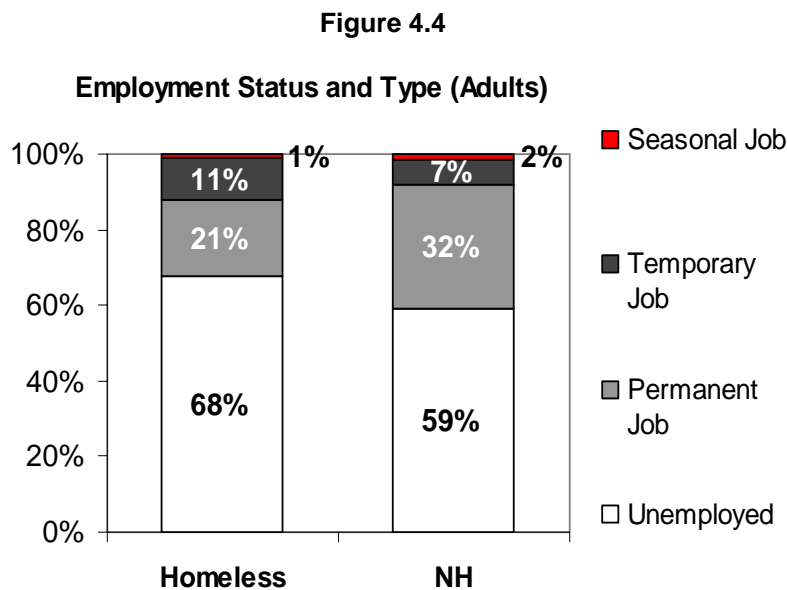
	Uninsurance Rates	
	Homeless	NH
<b>Adults</b>	58%	48%
<b>Children</b>	18%	15%
<b>All</b>	44%	37%

Among the uninsured homeless, 84 percent have not applied for health insurance (Figure 4.3). This suggests that many could be covered, especially children, if families applied for health insurance.



**Employment**

As we saw earlier, unemployment and the loss of employment were common factors contributing to homelessness. Even after becoming homeless, many of Iowa’s homeless manage to work (Figure 4.4). Among homeless adults over 18 years of age, 32 percent were employed during the reference week. About 21 percent of homeless adults (and the majority of homeless workers) were in a permanent job and 12 percent worked in a temporary or seasonal position (including as temp agency workers, day laborers, and on-call workers). Half of homeless workers worked more than 30 hours per week and only 9 percent worked fewer than 10 hours per week (Table 4.6).

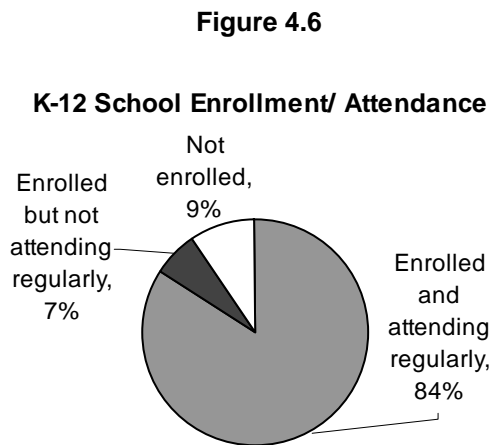
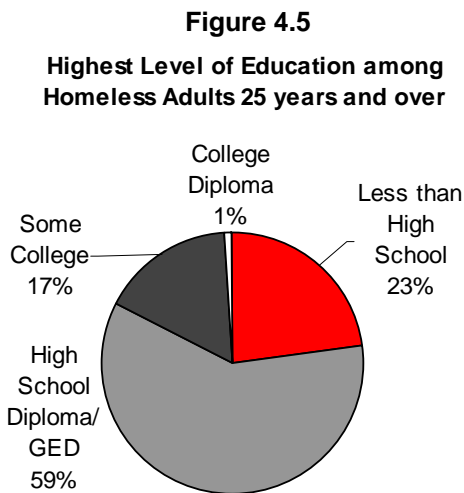


**Table 4.6**  
Hours Worked per Week by Employed Adults

	Homeless	NH
More than 30	50%	46%
Between 10 and 30	42%	47%
Less than 10	9%	7%

**Education and School Attendance**

Iowa’s homeless adults have lower levels of education than the rest of the population: Almost one-quarter of homeless adults 25 years and over have not completed high school and 60 percent have completed high school but had no further schooling (Figure 4.5).<sup>17</sup> Only 1 percent has a college diploma in comparison to 24 percent of the entire Iowa population 25 years and over.<sup>18</sup>



Among children between 6 and 18 years of age, 91 percent were enrolled in school (Figure 4.6). However, 9 percent were not enrolled and 7 percent were not attending school regularly.<sup>19</sup> Barriers to enrollment are explored in the following section of this report.

## Chapter 5. Service Provider Assessments

In addition to collecting information directly from the people that agencies served, we also elicited the perceptions of service providers on the homeless situation in their town or among the population they serve. The professionals who provide direct services to homeless people are our most knowledgeable source for an overview of the nature and extent of the problem we face in Iowa. Their perceptions provide another source of data from which to analyze the reasons for— and possible solutions to—homelessness. Their perceptions are valuable in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of what we do now, and in designing better services that will use resources more efficiently.

Sheriffs, Area Agencies on Aging, free medical clinics, community mental health clinics, county DHS offices, county General Assistance offices, Community Action Agencies, Veteran Affairs offices, homeless shelters, transitional housing programs, and educational institutions were asked to assess the significance of several factors that contribute to homelessness in their community, and to assess the significance of barriers to resolving homelessness locally. Educational institutions and homeless shelters were also asked for additional information pertinent only to them (i.e. need for educational services, number of beds, number of people turned away).

This chapter of the report summarizes and analyzes the responses we received from these surveys and investigates differences among counties of different urbanization and poverty levels.

### Demand for Services

Almost half of shelters reported an increase in the number of homeless people served during the first quarter of 2005 compared to the same period in 2004. Only 5 percent reported a decline in the number of people served since 2004 (Table 5.1).

**Table 5.1**  
Trend in Number of People Served by Shelters, 2004-2005

	Service Point Shelters	Other Shelters	All Shelters
More	47%	35%	45%
Fewer	4%	12%	5%
About the Same	49%	53%	50%

Sheriffs, VA offices, Area Agencies on Aging and free medical clinics were also asked this question. The vast majority of them —89 percent— reported serving about the same number of homeless people during the first quarter of 2005 compared to 2004. Only 8.2 percent estimated they had served more homeless.





## Factors that Contribute to Homelessness

The circumstances that lead to homelessness are social, economic and personal. As mentioned previously, there are often underlying causes and personal circumstances that lead to the eventual precipitating cause (such as when an illness leads to loss of employment, which leads to eviction). Service providers can provide information about underlying causes and community factors that may go unmentioned in surveys of the homeless. According to a majority of agencies, family breakup/divorce was the top factor contributing to homelessness in Iowa (Table 5.2). Substance abuse, job loss, inability to find affordable housing and domestic violence rounded out the top five. It should be noted that different types of agencies deal with different segments of the homeless population, and as a result rank factors differently. For example, sheriffs and probation officers were more likely to rank substance abuse as a top factor than were shelters and DHS offices.

**Table 5.2**

<b>Contributing Factors</b>		
1	Family break up/ divorce	2.2
2	Substance abuse/ addiction	2.3
3	Loss of employment income	2.3
4	Unable to find affordable housing	2.4
5	Domestic violence	2.6
6	Eviction/ foreclosure	2.6
7	Utility disconnection	2.9
8	Mental illness/ disability	3.0
9	Loss of benefits	3.1
10	Moved to seek work	3.2
11	Institutionalization of family member	3.2
12	De-institutionalization	3.3
13	Physical illness/ disability	3.4
14	↓ AIDS/ related illness	4.4

*Rating was on a scale from 1 to 5*

*1=Very significant 5=not significant*

*Note: Schools did not rank contributing factors.*

Counties of different poverty and urbanization levels shared some similarities and some differences. Each of the top four factors listed in Table 5.2 were also ranked in the top 4 for all county types (regardless of poverty or urbanization). However, the inability to find affordable housing was the top-ranked factor in metropolitan areas, but was ranked fourth in more rural counties. Metropolitan counties also ranked mental health problems and eviction/foreclosure as much more significant problems compared to smaller counties. Substance abuse was the top ranked factor in rural counties and family break-up was the top ranked factor in small urban and micropolitan counties (Table 5.3).

**Table 5.3**  
**Top Ranked Factors by County Types**

<b>County Urbanization</b>		<b>Rating</b>
Rural:	Substance abuse/ addiction	2.3
Small urban:	Family break up/ divorce	2.3
Micropolitan:	Family break up/ divorce	2.2
Metropolitan:	Unable to find affordable housing	2.1
<b>County Poverty</b>		
Low poverty:	Family break up/ divorce	2.3
Medium poverty:	Family break up/ divorce	2.2
High poverty:	Family break up/ divorce	2.2

*Rating was on a scale from 1 to 5*

*1=Very significant 5=not significant*

Family breakup was consistently rated as the top factor regardless of county poverty level. High poverty counties rated the inability to find affordable housing as a much more significant factor compared to low poverty counties. Appendix I has the complete ratings by county type.

#### **Definitions for County Groups (and number of counties falling in that category)**

- Rural:** Counties containing no towns of more than 2,500 people (17)  
**Small Urban:** Counties where the largest town has a population between 2,500 and 10,000 (46)  
**Micropolitan:** Counties where the largest city has a population between 10,000 and 50,000 (17)  
**Metropolitan:** Counties containing a city with a population of more than 50,000 (19)
- Low Poverty:** Counties with a 7.5% or lower poverty rate (23)  
**Medium Poverty:** Counties with a poverty rate between 7.6% and 10.4% (52)  
**High Poverty:** Counties with a 10.5% or higher poverty rate (24)

*Source: 2000 Census of Population and Housing*

#### **Barriers to Resolving Homelessness**

Service providers reported structural deficits in the community— the lack of living wage jobs and the lack of affordable housing— as the most significant barriers to reducing homelessness (Table 5.4). Also rated significant was a lack of housing assistance, of affordable day care, and of job training/ employment programs. While some segments of the homeless population may have very specific needs, the economic mismatch between earnings and housing costs appears to be of overwhelming significance.

Other barriers frequently mentioned but not included in the rankings were a lack of transportation and a general scarcity of funding for homeless programs, including emergency and transitional housing.

**Table 5.4**  
**Major Barriers to Homelessness**

		Rating
1	Lack of living wage jobs	2.0
2	Lack of affordable housing	2.2
3	Lack of housing assistance	2.4
4	Lack of affordable daycare services	2.9
5	Lack of job training/ employment services	2.9
6	Lack of substance abuse treatment services	3.1
7	Lack of mental health services	3.2
8	Lack of resources/ staff in service facilities	3.2
9	Lack of medical services	3.4
10	Lack of family/ domestic violence counseling	3.5

*Rating was on a scale from 1 to 5  
1=Very significant 5=not significant*

Regardless of country urbanization or poverty level, the lack of living wage jobs, affordable housing and housing assistance were the top three ranked barriers (Table 5.5). Economic factors were uniformly seen as the major barriers to resolving homelessness in rural, metropolitan, low and high poverty areas. However, there were still some noticeable differences between counties. Rural and metropolitan counties rated a lack of health and counseling services (family/ domestic violence counseling, mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and medical services) as much more significant barriers compared to their medium-sized counterparts (small urban and micropolitan counties).

**Table 5.5**  
**Major Barriers by County Types**

<b>County Urbanization</b>		Rating
Rural:	Lack of living wage jobs	2.0
Small urban:	Lack of living wage jobs	2.1
Micropolitan:	Lack of living wage jobs	2.1
Metropolitan:	Lack of living wage jobs	1.8
<b>County Poverty</b>		
Low poverty:	Lack of living wage jobs	2.4
Medium poverty:	Lack of living wage jobs	1.7
High poverty:	Lack of affordable housing	2.1

*Rating was on a scale from 1 to 5  
1=Very significant 5=not significant*

### **Enrollment Barriers and Educational Services for Homeless School Children**

Schools and Head Start programs were asked to rank the most important barriers to enrollment for homeless children. Lack of parental cooperation was seen as the most significant barrier, followed by transportation and residency requirements (Table 5.6). Homeless families are in crisis: Parents are struggling not only to keep kids in school, but also to satisfy basic needs, in many cases while dealing with illness, domestic violence, or some other problem. Furthermore, homeless families are in transition and have likely moved recently. Thus, they are more likely to have trouble meeting residency requirements and arranging school transportation for their children.

**Table 5.6**  
**Barriers to Enrollment**

		<u>Rating</u>
1	Lack of parental cooperation	2.2
2	Transportation	2.5
3	Residency requirements	2.7
4	Availability of school records	3.0
5	Legal guardianship requirements	3.0
6	Lack of available pre-school programs	3.1
7	Immunization requirements	3.2
8	Language	3.2
9	Birth certificates	3.4
10	Health	3.5
11	Physical examination records	3.7

*Rating was on a scale from 1 to 5  
1=Very significant 5=not significant*

Schools also rated the significance of several educational services in serving the homeless population and evaluated their ability to provide those services (Table 5.7).

**Table 5.7**  
**Significance of & Ability to Provide Certain Educational Services**

		<u>Significance Rating</u>	<u>Ability Rating</u>
	(Ranked by Significance)		
1	Free lunch/ breakfast	1.7	1.2
2	Counseling	2.0	2.0
3	Transportation	2.1	2.1
4	School/ agency coordination	2.2	2.3
5	Tutoring/ remedial	2.2	2.1
6	Special education	2.2	1.4
7	Parent training/ involvement	2.2	3.1
8	Medical services	2.3	2.7
9	School supplies	2.3	1.6
10	Preschool programs	2.5	2.5
11	Case management	2.5	2.6
12	Records transfer	2.5	2.1
13	Removing barriers to enrollment	2.8	2.0
14	Staff development/ training on homeless issues	2.9	3.1
15	Child care (for older students with children)	3.3	3.7
16	English as a second language	3.4	2.5

*Rating was on a scale from 1 to 5. For the significance rating,  
1=Very significant 5=not significant. For the ability rating,  
1=needs met completely 5=needs not met.*

Free lunch and breakfast programs were seen as the most significant, followed by counseling and transportation. Of nearly equal importance were school coordination with other service agencies, tutoring services, special education and parent training/ involvement.

By comparing differences in the ability of schools to provide certain services with the significance that schools placed on those services, we identified the five services most in need of improvement.

Although parent training was not scored as the most significant educational service, it does emerge as the service area most in need of improvement. Other services that need improvement are medical services, childcare for older students who are parents

**Educational Services Most in Need of Improvement:**

1. Parent training/ involvement
2. Medical service
3. Child care (for students with children or siblings to care for)
4. School/ agency coordination
5. Staff Development/ Training on homeless issues

themselves (or must care for their siblings), better coordination between schools and other agencies, and staff training. These results suggest a set of priorities to improve the capacity of schools and Head Start programs to meet the needs of homeless students. Given the problems faced by parents of homeless children, developing effective parent training and involvement programs will be a significant challenge.

## Chapter 6. Implications for Policy

The diverse circumstances of Iowa's homeless population require a multifaceted response involving both improved services and changes in public policy.

Persons with physical and mental health problems, disabilities, and substance abuse problems remain a significant share of the homeless population. With the appropriate treatment and supported housing, many of these folks could live successful, productive lives. Mental illness and substance abuse impact all aspects of society—education, homelessness, law enforcement and health care costs. Insufficient funding for treatment facilities will often shift costs to other (often higher-cost) public service systems: Emergency rooms, hospital psychiatric beds, and jail cells for example. Service providers in rural and metropolitan counties, in particular, noted a need for more counseling services, mental health services, substance abuse treatment and medical services.

In Iowa, as in the nation, the composition of the homeless population is changing. Homeless families with children are growing in number and proportion. While some of these families may suffer from a health problem, the economic mismatch between earnings and housing costs appears to be of overwhelming significance. Service providers reported structural deficits in the community—the lack of living wage jobs and the lack of affordable housing—as the most significant barriers to reducing homelessness. This assessment suggests that policies to boost the earnings of Iowa's low wage workers and to increase affordable housing would be most effective at alleviating homelessness in Iowa. Policies that would have positive effects on homelessness in all types of counties include:

1. Making work pay by:
  - Raising the minimum wage
  - Expanding the earned income tax credit
  - Reducing the cost of child care through universal pre-school or child care subsidies
  - Building skills through workforce development initiatives, and
  - Using economic development to increase the number of living wage jobs
2. Improving access to affordable housing through demand-side subsidies (such as vouchers) where appropriate housing is available and through targeted efforts to increase the supply of scarce housing types (such as decent, permanent housing for low-income individuals).

Targeted efforts to improve supportive services to people with mental illness and substance abuse problems and to families (especially victims of domestic violence) are important, but without adequate wages and affordable housing, the impact of these improvements *in reducing homelessness* may be limited.

While the end goal is to reduce the number of homeless people in Iowa, more shelter beds and transitional housing are needed in the near term in order to provide emergency shelter for the increasing numbers of homeless Iowans, especially families with children.

## Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> National Coalition for the Homeless, Fact Sheet #2 <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/numbers.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> There is also the possibility that some agencies did not report complete and accurate information. Many agencies that serve the homeless and near-homeless are understaffed and over worked. The reported data may sometimes reflect the capacity of an agency to respond rather than reality.

<sup>3</sup> The 21,280 figure is best interpreted as the number of homeless episodes experienced by Iowans throughout the year. Based on a study of homeless people in shelters in New York and Philadelphia over a period of two or three years [Kuhn, Randall and Dennis P. Culhane, "Applying Cluster Analysis to Test a Typology of Homelessness by Pattern of Shelter Utilization: Results from the Analysis of Administrative Data," *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 1998], the authors estimate that 20 percent of "replacement" episodes (used to annualize the raw counts) are people who are experiencing their second episode of homelessness during the year (the same people moving into and out of homelessness, and then back in again). Taking this into account, the number of different homeless *individuals* throughout the year would be about 18,000.

<sup>4</sup> About 28 percent of the 21,280 homeless Iowans were children. However, the actual percentage of children is probably closer to the 50 percent reported in 1999. In order to be conservative in our estimate, the authors assumed that all school-aged children reported by shelters and other agencies were already counted in the school data. (Schools did not provide information that allowed de-duping). Further reason to believe that children are undercounted is that schools were requested to report on every homeless student during the year. This leads to greater possibility of some students being missed, especially those who became homeless mid-school year or moved out of the district mid-year. Other evidence also points to the increasing number of children. For example, families with children are now the most common type of homeless household in Iowa.

<sup>5</sup> There are several differences between the 1999 and 2005 study. The Service Point system was in its early stage of development and thus much less data was available. As a result, the 1999 study estimated different turnover rates (average length of homeless episodes) for annualizing than the 2005 study. The 2005 study also had higher response rates. So, unlike the 1999 study, the authors did not need to develop estimates for non-response counties. The 1999 study also came before the Department of Education began collecting information on homeless students through Project Easier. So, schools were surveyed directly and student info was available to de-dupe with the rest of the database. Prior to the 2005 study, persons living doubled up were also classified as homeless. If the doubled-up were not included, the 1999 estimate drops to almost 15,000 homeless Iowans. This would suggest a relatively large increase in homelessness in six years. However, the authors caution against drawing a conclusion of an increase of this magnitude in six years. Differences in data collection and methodology make the numbers not perfectly comparable.

<sup>6</sup> However, the profiles (demographics, etc...) of Iowa's homeless population presented later are based on an analysis of data that includes individuals temporarily living doubled up with family or friends as well as all school-aged children and the anonymous.

<sup>7</sup> Students identified by school districts are assigned to the county which contains the majority of the school district.

<sup>8</sup> Further suggesting that 50 percent is about right is the fact that it falls in between our underestimate of 30 percent (from the count) and our overestimate of 64 percent (which we would get using the same universe as in the profiles).

<sup>9</sup> This conceptual image of the causes of homelessness was derived from a report by the Alameda Countywide Shelter and Services Survey 2004, Public Health Institute of Oakland, CA.

<sup>10</sup> The vast majority of responses to this question came from the Service Point database. The authors believe that data collected on income and benefit sources is incomplete in Service Point because there is no information on income sources for most clients. Because of the survey format, the authors could not distinguish missing data from a "no" response. Researchers had to assume that anyone without information on their income or benefits did not receive those income sources. In fact, many people were probably just missing that data. As a result, the percentage of households receiving each type of benefit may be lower than reality.

<sup>11</sup> In 20 percent of the cases, teachers or administrators did not know whether the student had received treatment for a serious emotional disorder.

<sup>12</sup> In 36 percent of the cases, teachers or administrators did not know whether the student was receiving treatment for a substance abuse problem.

<sup>13</sup> In 7 percent of the cases, teachers or administrators did not know whether the student was receiving benefits or services for the disability.

<sup>14</sup> These estimates are derived from the population of the homeless who provided answers on all the relevant questions to determine chronic homelessness. Furthermore, only about half of all agencies received the survey with disability questions. Thus, only individuals who were not missing on all the relevant questions and who received the survey with disability questions were included in the universe for estimating the percent of the homeless who are chronically homeless.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2004), Current Population Survey, <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/hlthins/historic/hihist5.html>

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2004), Current Population Survey, <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/hlthins/historic/hihist5.html>

<sup>17</sup> Results for the near-homeless were very similar to near homeless adults. Therefore, data on highest education level completed is presented only for the homeless.

<sup>18</sup> 2004 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

<sup>19</sup> The enrollment question was asked in both the Service Point and IPP survey. However, only the IPP survey asked whether students were attending regularly.

<sup>20</sup> Beds may be under-counted or over-counted in some counties because some shelters did not respond while others may have included transitional housing beds as well.

# Appendix I

Tables & Charts Referenced in Report .....	1
Methodology .....	13
Data Collection .....	17

## Tables & Charts Referenced in Report

### Number of Homeless lowans, 2005

	Number	Percent
<b>Unduplicated Raw Counts:</b>		
School/ Head Start children	2,434	38%
Non-school children	745	12%
Adults	3,265	51%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,444</b>	
<b>Annualized Estimate:</b>		
School / Head Start children	2,434	11%
Non-school children	3,500	16%
Adults	15,346	72%
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,280</b>	

Notes: Counts for school children were already annualized.  
The adult category in the raw count includes 17 people who did not report an age. "Non-school children" are people under the age of 6 (but not identified by schools or Head Start).

2005 Iowa Statewide Homeless Study

Homeless Persons by County		
County	Annualized Count	Per Capita Homelessness
Adair	0	0.0%
Adams	0	0.0%
Allamakee	1	0.0%
Appanoose	20	0.1%
Audubon	0	0.0%
Benton	33	0.1%
Black Hawk	957	0.8%
Boone	87	0.3%
Bremer	116	0.5%
Buchanan	4	0.0%
Buena Vista	1	0.0%
Butler	12	0.1%
Calhoun	19	0.2%
Carroll	8	0.0%
Cass	11	0.1%
Cedar	10	0.1%
Cerro Gordo	227	0.5%
Cherokee	62	0.5%
Chickasaw	0	0.0%
Clarke	5	0.1%
Clay	51	0.3%
Clayton	6	0.0%
Clinton	1,678	3.4%
Crawford	8	0.0%
Dallas	222	0.4%
Davis	9	0.1%
Decatur	5	0.1%
Delaware	12	0.1%
Des Moines	40	0.1%
Dickinson	60	0.4%
Dubuque	552	0.6%
Emmet	15	0.1%
Fayette	5	0.0%
Floyd	2	0.0%
Franklin	4	0.0%
Fremont	2	0.0%
Greene	6	0.1%
Grundy	8	0.1%
Guthrie	3	0.0%
Hamilton	2	0.0%
Hancock	2	0.0%
Hardin	5	0.0%
Harrison	8	0.1%
Henry	14	0.1%
Howard	4	0.0%
Humboldt	0	0.0%
Ida	2	0.0%
Iowa	0	0.0%
Jackson	159	0.8%
Jasper	1	0.0%

Homeless Persons by County		
County	Annualized Count	Per Capita Homelessness
Jefferson	13	0.1%
Johnson	1,257	1.1%
Jones	2	0.0%
Keokuk	6	0.1%
Kossuth	7	0.0%
Lee	5	0.0%
Linn	1,875	1.0%
Louisa	22	0.2%
Lucas	10	0.1%
Lyon	0	0.0%
Madison	6	0.0%
Mahaska	97	0.4%
Marion	2	0.0%
Marshall	646	1.6%
Mills	7	0.0%
Mitchell	0	0.0%
Monona	1	0.0%
Monroe	15	0.2%
Montgomery	2	0.0%
Muscatine	354	0.8%
OBrien	7	0.0%
Osceola	0	0.0%
Page	2	0.0%
Palo Alto	3	0.0%
Plymouth	5	0.0%
Pocahontas	6	0.1%
Polk	6,008	1.5%
Pottawattamie	1,594	1.8%
Poweshiek	3	0.0%
Ringgold	6	0.1%
Sac	6	0.1%
Scott	2,298	1.4%
Shelby	5	0.0%
Sioux	67	0.2%
Story	966	1.2%
Tama	10	0.1%
Taylor	1	0.0%
Union	2	0.0%
Van Buren	1	0.0%
Wapello	181	0.5%
Warren	1	0.0%
Washington	100	0.5%
Wayne	6	0.1%
Webster	516	1.3%
Winnebago	4	0.0%
Winneshiek	33	0.2%
Woodbury	656	0.6%
Worth	0	0.0%
Wright	3	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,280</b>	

**Number of Homeless Students by School District, 2004-2005 school year**

<b>District Name</b>	<b>HUD</b>	<b>Doubled Up</b>	<b>Total (DE)</b>	<b>Per Capita (Homeless / Enrollment)</b>
Adair-Casey Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Adel-DeSoto-Minburn Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
AGWSR Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
A-H-S-T Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Akron Westfield Comm School District	0	3	3	0.5%
Albert City-Truesdale Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Albia Comm School District	11	23	34	2.8%
Alburnett Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Alden Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Algona Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Allamakee Comm School District	1	0	1	0.1%
Allison-Bristow Comm School District	12	8	20	6.9%
Alta Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Ames Comm School District	124	23	147	3.3%
Anamosa Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Andrew Comm School District	3	0	3	0.9%
Anita Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Ankeny Comm School District	6	0	6	0.1%
Anthon-Oto Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Aplington-Parkersburg Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Armstrong-Ringsted Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Ar-We-Va Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Atlantic Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Audubon Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Aurelia Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Ballard Comm School District	1	4	5	0.4%
Battle Creek-Ida Grove Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Baxter Comm School District	1	2	3	0.8%
BCLUW Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Bedford Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Belle Plaine Comm School District	5	10	15	2.3%
Bellevue Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Belmond-Klemme Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Bennett Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Benton Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Bettendorf Comm School District	40	58	98	2.3%
Bondurant-Farrar Comm School District	5	0	5	0.5%
Boone Comm School District	18	3	21	0.9%
Boyden-Hull Comm School District	2	0	2	0.3%
Boyer Valley Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Brooklyn-Guernsey-Malcom Comm School District	1	3	4	0.6%
Burlington Comm School District	7	38	45	1.0%
C and M Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
CAL Comm School District	1	1	2	0.9%
Calamus-Wheatland Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Camanche Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Cardinal Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%

District Name	HUD	Doubled Up	Total (DE)	Per Capita
Carlisle Comm School District	1	1	2	0.1%
Carroll Comm School District	1	0	1	0.1%
Cedar Falls Comm School District	12	22	34	0.8%
Cedar Rapids Comm School District	212	338	550	3.2%
Center Point-Urbana Comm School District	5	0	5	0.4%
Centerville Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Central City Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Central Clinton Comm School District	3	22	25	1.6%
Central Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Central Decatur Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Central Lee Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Central Lyon Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Chariton Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Charles City Comm School District	0	9	9	0.6%
Charter Oak-Ute Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Cherokee Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Clarinda Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Clarion-Goldfield Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Clarke Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Clarksville Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Clay Central-Everly Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Clear Creek-Amana Comm School District	0	1	1	0.1%
Clear Lake Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Clearfield Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Clinton Comm School District	62	144	206	4.8%
Colfax-Mingo Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
College Comm School District	50	29	79	2.0%
Collins-Maxwell Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Colo-Nesco Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Columbus Comm School District	8	43	51	4.9%
Coon Rapids-Bayard Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Corning Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Corwith-Wesley Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Council Bluffs Comm School District	447	0	447	4.8%
Creston Comm School District	2	3	5	0.3%
Dallas Center-Grimes Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Danville Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Davenport Comm School District	147	170	317	2.0%
Davis County Comm School District	9	10	19	1.6%
Decorah Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Deep River-Millersburg Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Delwood Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Denison Comm School District	0	2	2	0.1%
Denver Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Des Moines Independent Comm School District	191	332	523	1.6%
Diagonal Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Dike-New Hartford Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Dows Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Dubuque Comm School District	14	47	61	0.6%
Dunkerton Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%

District Name	HUD	Doubled Up	Total (DE)	Per Capita
Durant Comm School District	9	0	9	1.3%
Eagle Grove Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Earlham Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
East Buchanan Comm School District	0	2	2	0.4%
East Central Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
East Greene Comm School District	6	0	6	1.6%
East Marshall Comm School District	7	14	21	2.6%
East Union Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Eastern Allamakee Comm School District	0	1	1	0.2%
Eddyville-Blakesburg Comm School District	0	2	2	0.2%
Edgewood-Colesburg Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Eldora-New Providence Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Elk Horn-Kimballton Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Emmetsburg Comm School District	1	0	1	0.1%
English Valleys Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Essex Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Estherville Lincoln Central Com Sch Dist	15	16	31	2.4%
Exira Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Fairfield Comm School District	7	5	12	0.6%
Farragut Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Forest City Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Fort Dodge Comm School District	34	30	64	1.6%
Fort Madison Comm School District	0	1	1	0.0%
Fredericksburg Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Fremont Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Fremont-Mills Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Galva-Holstein Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Garnavillo Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Garner-Hayfield Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
George-Little Rock Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Gilbert Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Gilmore City-Bradgate Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Gladbrook-Reinbeck Comm School District	1	0	1	0.1%
Glenwood Comm School District	1	2	3	0.1%
Glidden-Ralston Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
GMG Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Graettinger Comm School District	2	0	2	0.8%
Grand Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Greene Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Grinnell-Newburg Comm School District	0	2	2	0.1%
Griswold Comm School District	11	0	11	1.7%
Grundy Center Comm School District	1	0	1	0.1%
Guthrie Center Comm School District	0	3	3	0.5%
Guttenberg Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Hamburg Comm School District	2	4	6	1.9%
Hampton-Dumont Comm School District	3	2	5	0.4%
Harlan Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Harmony Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Harris-Lake Park Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Hartley-Melvin-Sanborn Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%

District Name	HUD	Doubled Up	Total (DE)	Per Capita
Highland Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Hinton Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
H-L-V Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Howard-Winneshiek Comm School District	4	2	6	0.4%
Hubbard-Radcliffe Comm School District	2	19	21	4.7%
Hudson Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Humboldt Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
IKM Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Independence Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Indianola Comm School District	0	1	1	0.0%
Interstate 35 Comm School District	3	0	3	0.4%
Iowa City Comm School District	53	16	69	0.6%
Iowa Falls Comm School District	3	0	3	0.3%
Iowa Valley Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Janesville Consolidated Comm School District	0	1	1	0.4%
Jefferson-Scranton Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Jesup Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Johnston Comm School District	2	0	2	0.0%
Keokuk Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Keota Comm School District	1	6	7	1.9%
Kingsley-Pierson Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Knoxville Comm School District	0	4	4	0.2%
Lake Mills Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Lamoni Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Laurens-Marathon Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Lawton-Bronson Comm School District	11	12	23	3.8%
Le Mars Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Lenox Comm School District	1	0	1	0.3%
Lewis Central Comm School District	1	11	12	0.4%
Lineville-Clio Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Linn-Mar Comm School District	1	1	2	0.0%
Lisbon Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Logan-Magnolia Comm School District	5	0	5	0.7%
Lone Tree Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Louisa-Muscatine Comm School District	5	10	15	1.6%
LuVerne Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Lynnville-Sully Comm School District	0	1	1	0.2%
Madrid Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Malvern Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Manning Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Manson Northwest Webster Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Maple Valley Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Maquoketa Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Maquoketa Valley Comm School District	8	6	14	1.6%
Marcus-Meriden-Cleghorn Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Marion Independent School District	5	14	19	1.0%
Marshalltown Comm School District	25	87	112	2.3%
Martensdale-St Marys Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Mason City Comm School District	16	19	35	0.8%
Mediapolis Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%

2005 Iowa Statewide Homeless Study

District Name	HUD	Doubled Up	Total (DE)	Per Capita
Melcher-Dallas Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Meservey-Thornton Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
MFL MarMac Comm School District	1	0	1	0.1%
Midland Comm School District	2	0	2	0.4%
Mid-Prairie Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Missouri Valley Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
MOC-Floyd Valley Comm School District	1	1	2	0.2%
Montezuma Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Monticello Comm School District	0	1	1	0.1%
Moravia Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Mormon Trail Comm School District	0	1	1	0.4%
Morning Sun Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Moulton-Udell Comm School District	11	3	14	5.3%
Mount Ayr Comm School District	6	6	12	1.7%
Mount Pleasant Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Mount Vernon Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Murray Comm School District	0	1	1	0.3%
Muscatine Comm School District	27	13	40	0.7%
Nashua-Plainfield Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Nevada Comm School District	1	1	2	0.1%
New Hampton Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
New London Comm School District	0	5	5	0.9%
New Market Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Newell-Fonda Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Newton Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Nishna Valley Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Nodaway Valley Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Nora Springs-Rock Falls Comm School District	2	0	2	0.4%
North Cedar Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
North Central Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
North Fayette Comm School District	1	0	1	0.1%
North Iowa Comm School District	4	9	13	2.2%
North Kossuth Comm School District	0	1	1	0.3%
North Linn Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
North Mahaska Comm School District	1	0	1	0.2%
North Polk Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
North Scott Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
North Tama County Comm School District	1	0	1	0.2%
North Winneshiek Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Northeast Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Northeast Hamilton Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Northwood-Kensett Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Norwalk Comm School District	0	26	26	1.2%
Odebolt-Arthur Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Oelwein Comm School District	3	58	61	4.6%
Ogden Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Okoboji Comm School District	5	0	5	0.6%
Olin Consolidated Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Orient-Macksburg Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Osage Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%

District Name	HUD	Doubled Up	Total (DE)	Per Capita
Oskaloosa Comm School District	68	2	70	3.0%
Ottumwa Comm School District	73	104	177	3.8%
Panorama Comm School District	2	0	2	0.3%
Paton-Churdan Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
PCM Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Pekin Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Pella Comm School District	2	0	2	0.1%
Perry Comm School District	32	86	118	6.6%
Pleasant Valley Comm School District	41	8	49	1.5%
Pleasantville Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Pocahontas Area Comm School District	6	7	13	2.0%
Pomeroy-Palmer Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Postville Comm School District	0	2	2	0.4%
Prairie Valley Comm School District	10	0	10	1.3%
Prescott Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Preston Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Red Oak Comm School District	0	1	1	0.1%
Remsen-Union Comm School District	0	2	2	0.5%
Riceville Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
River Valley Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Riverside Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Rock Valley Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Rockwell City-Lytton Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Rockwell-Swaledale Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Roland-Story Comm School District	0	7	7	0.6%
Rudd-Rockford-Marble Rk Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Russell Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Ruthven-Ayrshire Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Sac Comm School District	6	1	7	1.4%
Saydel Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Schaller-Crestland Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Schleswig Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Sentral Comm School District	1	0	1	0.5%
Sergeant Bluff-Luton Comm School District	0	2	2	0.1%
Seymour Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Sheffield-Chapin Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Sheldon Comm School District	7	0	7	0.7%
Shenandoah Comm School District	0	1	1	0.1%
Sibley-Ocheyedan Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Sidney Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Sigourney Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Sioux Center Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Sioux Central Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Sioux City Comm School District	100	123	223	1.7%
Solon Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
South Clay Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
South Hamilton Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
South O'Brien Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
South Page Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
South Tama County Comm School District	8	12	20	1.1%

District Name	HUD	Doubled Up	Total (DE)	Per Capita
South Winneshiek Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Southeast Polk Comm School District	8	75	83	1.7%
Southeast Warren Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Southeast Webster Comm School District	3	0	3	0.6%
Southern Cal Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Spencer Comm School District	8	2	10	0.5%
Spirit Lake Comm School District	37	8	45	3.4%
Springville Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
St Ansgar Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Stanton Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Starmont Comm School District	5	0	5	0.6%
Storm Lake Comm School District	1	4	5	0.3%
Stratford Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Sumner Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Terril Comm School District	1	0	1	0.7%
Tipton Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Titonka Consolidated Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Treynor Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Tri-Center Comm School District	0	1	1	0.1%
Tri-County Comm School District	0	8	8	2.4%
Tripoli Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Turkey Valley Comm School District	1	0	1	0.2%
Twin Cedars Comm School District	0	1	1	0.2%
Twin Rivers Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Underwood Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Union Comm School District	2	0	2	0.2%
United Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Urbandale Comm School District	0	7	7	0.2%
Valley Comm School District	1	0	1	0.2%
Van Buren Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Van Meter Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Ventura Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Villisca Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Vinton-Shellsburg Comm School District	3	6	9	0.5%
Waco Comm School District	3	0	3	0.6%
Wall Lake View Auburn Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Walnut Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Wapello Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Wapsie Valley Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Washington Comm School District	4	10	14	0.8%
Waterloo Comm School District	49	58	107	1.0%
Waukee Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Waverly-Shell Rock Comm School District	1	0	1	0.1%
Wayne Comm School District	2	3	5	0.9%
Webster City Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
West Bend-Mallard Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
West Branch Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
West Burlington Ind Comm School District	0	1	1	0.1%
West Central Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
West Central Valley Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%

<b>District Name</b>	<b>HUD</b>	<b>Doubled Up</b>	<b>Total (DE)</b>	<b>Per Capita</b>
West Delaware County Comm School District	2	0	2	0.1%
West Des Moines Comm School District	11	5	16	0.2%
West Hancock Comm School District	2	0	2	0.3%
West Harrison Comm School District	3	19	22	4.2%
West Liberty Comm School District	3	0	3	0.3%
West Lyon Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
West Marshall Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
West Monona Comm School District	1	0	1	0.1%
West Sioux Comm School District	33	55	88	12.8%
Western Dubuque Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Westwood Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Whiting Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Williamsburg Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Wilton Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Winfield-Mt Union Comm School District	2	3	5	1.2%
Winterset Comm School District	3	5	8	0.5%
Woden-Crystal Lake Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Woodbine Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Woodbury Central Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
Woodward-Granger Comm School District	0	0	0	0.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2259</b>	<b>2398</b>	<b>4657</b>	

Notes: All 447 homeless students reported by the Council Bluffs School District were recorded as having an unknown living situation, and were assumed to be homeless meeting the HUD definition. The Department of Education (DE) definition for homelessness includes students living temporarily doubled up with family or friends. If the type of homelessness was unknown, the student was assumed not to be living doubled up.

Household Circumstances among the Near- Homeless

Utility disconnection	58%
Loss of employment income/ unemployment	21%
Eviction/ foreclosure	14%
Physical illness/ disability	12%
Loss of benefits	7%
Unable to find affordable housing	7%
Mental illness/ disability	6%
Family break up/ divorce/ runaway	4%
Substance abuse/ addiction	3%
Domestic violence	2%
De-institutionalization (jail, hospital, foster care)	1%
Institutionalization of family member (jail, hospital)	1%
Unknown	9%
Other	6%

Notes: This information was only collected in the IPP surveys.  
Persons selected all that were applicable.

**Contributing Factors to Homelessness by County Urbanization**

	Rural	Small Urban	Micropolitan	Metropolitan
Eviction/ foreclosure	2.74	2.93	2.61	2.40
Unable to find affordable housing	2.62	2.78	2.55	2.10
Loss of employment income	2.42	2.50	2.38	2.20
Loss of benefits	3.05	3.25	3.14	2.94
Utility disconnection	2.83	2.99	2.81	2.81
Substance abuse/ addiction	2.26	2.55	2.28	2.22
Family break up/ divorce	2.30	2.34	2.19	2.15
Domestic violence	2.70	2.79	2.63	2.51
AIDS/ related illness	4.55	4.56	4.39	4.32
Institutionalization of family member	3.34	3.42	3.30	2.99
Mental illness/ disability	3.23	3.26	3.05	2.78
Physical illness/ disability	3.37	3.52	3.41	3.30
De-institutionalization	3.41	3.42	3.26	3.12
Moved to seek work	3.19	3.18	3.16	3.22
Other factor	3.37	3.78	3.12	2.68

**\*\*1=Very significant 5=not significant**

**Contributing Factors to Homelessness by County Poverty**

	Low poverty	Medium poverty	High poverty
Unable to find affordable housing	2.71	2.40	2.31
Eviction/ foreclosure	2.89	2.54	2.62
Loss of benefits	3.24	3.06	3.01
Domestic violence	2.81	2.58	2.59
Institutionalization of family member	3.36	3.15	3.22
Substance abuse/ addiction	2.48	2.26	2.36
Utility disconnection	3.00	2.81	2.89
Loss of employment income	2.46	2.33	2.29
Mental illness/ disability	3.12	2.97	3.05
De-institutionalization	3.32	3.27	3.20
Physical illness/ disability	3.48	3.36	3.39
Moved to seek work	3.25	3.20	3.14
Family break up/ divorce	2.26	2.22	2.23
AIDS/ related illness	4.44	4.41	4.45
Other factor	3.40	3.17	3.05

**\*\*1=Very significant 5=not significant**

**Major Barriers by County Urbanization**

	Rural	Small Urban	Micropolitan	Metropolitan
Lack of affordable housing	2.44	2.42	2.29	1.85
Lack of housing assistance	2.65	2.68	2.55	2.13
Lack of medical services	3.29	3.76	3.45	3.05
Lack of mental health services	2.70	3.69	3.39	2.79
Lack of substance abuse treatment services	2.68	3.41	3.52	2.83
Lack of resources/ staff in service facilities	3.20	3.56	3.39	2.87
Lack of job training/ employment services	2.70	3.15	3.06	2.75
Lack of family/ domestic violence counseling	2.88	3.63	4.00	3.28
Lack of affordable daycare services	2.91	3.14	3.05	2.63
Lack of living wage jobs	1.98	2.14	2.08	1.78
Other barrier	2.20	2.81	1.77	1.64

**\*\*1=Very significant 5=not significant**

**Major Barriers by County Poverty**

	Low poverty	Medium poverty	High poverty
Lack of affordable housing	2.43	2.16	2.07
Lack of housing assistance	2.72	2.34	2.47
Lack of medical services	3.47	3.27	3.56
Lack of mental health services	3.44	3.06	3.28
Lack of substance abuse treatment services	3.28	3.08	3.17
Lack of resources/ staff in service facilities	3.37	3.25	3.10
Lack of job training/ employment services	2.94	2.83	3.13
Lack of family/ domestic violence counseling	3.68	3.48	3.41
Lack of affordable daycare services	3.09	2.87	2.88
Lack of living wage jobs	2.41	1.74	2.14
Other barrier	2.75	1.79	1.94

**\*\*1=Very significant 5=not significant**

## Methodology

### ***How do we Define Homelessness?***

Assessing homelessness is a difficult assignment and one for which researchers have taken a variety of methodological approaches, but any homeless study begins with the basic question of how to define homeless.

The 2005 study relied upon the McKinney Act (P.L. 100-77, sec 103(2)(1), 101 stat. 485 [1987]), which defines homelessness as:

- A person without fixed, regular and adequate nighttime shelter;
- A person whose primary nighttime residence is:
  - A supervised shelter designed to provide temporary accommodations (such as congregate shelter or transitional housing);
  - A public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping place for human beings (such as a car, camper, abandoned building, barn or street).

This definition has been broadly interpreted to include:

- Children in runaway shelters or group homes (e.g. homes for abandoned children);
- Children living in state institutions (e.g., awaiting foster home placement) because they have no other home;
- Sick or abandoned children who would be released from the institution (e.g., hospitals) they are living in, if they had another place to go;
- A person or household living doubled-up with family or friends for a temporary period (not because they want to share housing but because the doubled-up family has no other home to go to).

*The official estimate of the size of Iowa's homeless population is derived using the most conservative definition of homelessness, which excludes individuals living doubled up. However, the profiles of Iowa's homeless population are derived from analyses that include individuals living doubled up.*

### ***How do we Define Near Homelessness?***

All persons served by agencies reporting to the HMIS Service Point database who were not identified as being homeless, were considered near-homeless. Schools and Head Start programs were not asked to report data on near-homeless students. The agencies that the Iowa Policy Project surveyed used the following definition:

- A person or household in imminent danger of eviction.
- A person or household in imminent danger of having their utilities disconnected.
- A person or household seeking housing assistance, AND paying more than 50% of their income for housing.

### ***Survey Design and Response Rates***

Any study of homelessness faces limitations in time and funding. In considering the budget and reporting resources for this project, we consulted with the Council and came to a consensus that a point in time survey provided the best, most expedient approach to collecting accurate data. In addition to our own surveys, we would rely heavily on data already reported to Service Point by homeless service providers and on data reported by schools to the Department of Education (through Project EASIER).

Because homeless shelters serve only a portion of the homeless population, the study was designed to target a broad range of agencies and services where homeless or near-homeless people might be

identified or seek assistance. Our list of targeted agencies and departments included not only those that provide direct service to the homeless, but others such as law enforcement and Veteran’s Affairs offices, who may, as part of their routine work, come in contact with homeless people.

This study relied on mail back surveys distributed to a total of 2,375 schools and agencies. About 488 of those agencies were asked to report on all homeless clients served during the study period. For those agencies, a key goal in designing the survey was to minimize the reporting burden. With this in mind the survey was divided into two parts:

1. Part One (perceptions) collected information on the agency/respondent’s perceptions about the homeless situation in their service area, including factors that contribute to homelessness and barriers to overcoming homelessness.
2. Part Two (individual data) collected detailed information on individuals and households served during the study period.

Table A.1 lists all the agencies that received both Part One and Part Two of the survey and their response rates. Head Start programs were asked to report all students who were homeless at any point during the school year. The other agencies were asked to collect information on every homeless or near-homeless person served by their office during the two-week period between March 28, 2005 and April 8, 2005.

Table A.1 Response Rates for Agencies Reporting on Each Homeless Client

	No. Surveyed	No. Returned	Response Rate
Head Starts*	18	12	67%
CAP outreach offices	118	92	78%
Co. DHS offices**	107	94	88%
Co. General Assis. offices	99	53	54%
Community Mental Health Clinics	57	20	35%
PATHS	5	2	40%
Shelters***	84	21	25%
Total	488	294	60%

Notes:

\* We had 40 survey respondents from Head Start offices because some offices were headquarters and distributed the surveys to head starts in other cities.

\*\*Some counties had more than one DHS office.

\*\*\*Shelter list was not as clean as other lists and probably included agencies that were not shelters and that no longer existed, thus pushing down the response rate.

About 238 homeless service programs (mostly shelters and transitional housing programs) already report detailed information on their clients to a central database called Service Point. Therefore, Iowa Policy Project researchers used the Service Point data for client data and only sent these agencies Part One (perceptions) of our survey.

County sheriff departments, VA offices, Area Agencies on Aging and free medical clinics also received just Part One of the survey (Probation and Parole officers were also provided the opportunity to respond in a web-based survey). Responses from these agencies served as a “check” on the number of homeless reported by other agencies (we asked them to estimate the number of homeless that they encounter

during the first 3 months of the year) and provided perceptions of the homeless problem from a more diverse set of viewpoints.

Table A.2 presents response rates for those agencies that only received Part One of the survey.

Table A.2 Response Rates for Agencies Receiving Only Part One of the Survey

	No. Surveyed	No. Returned	Response Rate
Service Point Agencies	129	81	63%
Area Agencies on Aging*	13	10	77%
Free Medical Clinics	27	7	26%
Co. Sheriffs**	99	57	58%
Co. Veteran Affairs offices	87	47	54%
<b>Total</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>57%</b>

Notes:

\*AAA's were asked to distribute surveys to vendors. As a result, we actually had 20 survey respondents for this survey.

\*\*Scott County Jail also returned a survey separately from the Scott County Sheriff, so we actually had 58 survey respondents.

The count of homeless students along with demographic information came from the Department of Education's Project EASIER database. Project Easier requires that all schools report the number of students homeless at any point during the school year. Thus, these estimates are already annualized for us and the response rate is 100 percent. The Department of Education provided the dataset de-duplicated. The Iowa Policy Project also surveyed all schools on perceptions of homelessness and a sample (25%) of schools were also surveyed for information on the mental health, substance abuse, and disability status of homeless students. Table A.3 presents the response rates for surveys sent to schools.

Table A.3 Response Rates for Schools

	No. Surveyed	No. Returned	Response Rate
Schools	1532	1179	77%

A toll-free phone help line and an e-mail address for assistance appeared on all survey-related documents allowing survey respondents to easily ask questions or seek clarification. All messages and queries received responses within one business day.

Survey materials, including survey instruments and cover letters, can be found in Appendix II.

### ***Dealing with Duplicates***

Deriving an accurate estimate of the size of the homeless population depended on our ability to establish an unduplicated count. Because the agencies that serve the homeless have significant overlap—with individuals and families seeking various forms of help from more than one agency—there was the risk of over-counting due to duplication.

In this study, duplicate reports on individuals were identified based on a match of the first four letters of the last name and the last four digits of the social security number. Individuals for whom there was insufficient identifying information were assumed to be duplicates and were excluded from the final count used as the basis for the annualized estimate. However, other information provided for these

individuals—such as factors contributing to homelessness, demographic information, income and disability status, etc.—were used in providing a profile of homelessness.

As mentioned previously, the Department of Education provided a de-duplicated database of homeless students. However, we were not provided with the information necessary to check for duplicates within the Iowa Policy Project and Service Point database. As a result, all school-age children identified in Iowa Policy Project and Service Point surveys were assumed to be duplicated in the Project Easier data and were therefore not included in the final count.

### ***Annualizing the Raw Counts***

The 2005 Iowa Homeless Study relied on counts of homeless and near-homeless persons conducted over a limited period of time. DHS offices, General Assistance offices, community mental health clinics, and Community Action Agencies were surveyed during a two-week study period in spring 2005. All Service Point agencies (including most shelters) were surveyed over a 26 day period. Extrapolating from these raw counts posed several methodological challenges. This Appendix describes these challenges and explains how we resolved the dilemmas they raise.

A point-in-time study is a snapshot of the homeless population during a fixed period of time. We do not know how much turnover (the replacement rate) there will be in the population over a year. A person served today may find stable housing next week, or they may remain homeless for many months. People who are not currently homeless may become homeless at some point later in the year. Estimating the number of homeless people in Iowa in any year requires that we account for those who are or who will become temporarily homeless in 2005, along with those who are chronically homeless.

So, how do we adjust our point-in-time count to estimate the number of Iowans who were homeless at some point in 2005?

The counts of homeless and near-homeless people in our surveys reflect the homeless situation in Iowa for only a limited time period. It would be overly-simplistic and inaccurate to simply inflate these counts because the people counted during the study period have been or will be homeless for varying lengths of time.

Some people are only temporarily homeless, while others may be homeless for several periods during the year or for the whole year. In estimating the annual homeless population we must consider 3 factors:

- How many of those reported as homeless will remain homeless all year?
- How many will find stable housing?
- How many people who are not currently homeless will become homeless?

In other words, if we were to take similar “snapshots” of the homeless population during every two week period in the year, how many different people would appear over the course of the year?

Our task here was to estimate what these *other* “snapshots” would look like during 2005. The people counted during the study period can be divided into categories reflecting the length of time they had been homeless as of the last day of the study period. We could think of these categories as a set of probabilities that any homeless person would remain homeless for a specific length of time. In other words, we assume that a snapshot taken at any two week period would have a similar proportion of people who had been homeless for less than two weeks, for between two weeks and one month, and so on.

Turnover within the Service Point Homeless Population	
Length of Homeless Episode	Percent of Individuals
Less than two weeks	11.7%
Between two weeks and a month	7.8%
Between one and two months	12.8%
Between two and six months	22.9%
More than six months	44.8%

Of course, among the people reported as being homeless for less than two weeks, a proportion may remain homeless for much longer periods. We accounted for this using the same probabilities. Of those who were homeless for less than 2 weeks, there is a 11.7 percent probability they will be homeless for *only* 2 weeks, a 7.8 percent probability they will be homeless between 2 weeks and one month, and so on. If our “snapshot” of the homeless population remains similar for each two-week period in the year (with the same long-term homeless people but different short-term people), we can use these probabilities to work out how many *different* people are likely be homeless over one year.

An illustration may help to clarify the method. For instance, agencies in Cerro Gordo County reported 12 homeless individuals in the two-week IPP study. Of those, we expected that 1.4 percent (11.7% of 11.7%) would be homeless for no more than two weeks, and would be replaced by other temporarily homeless individuals during each two week period (26 periods) over the course of the year. Thus, we could expect that 4.3 different individuals would be homeless in Cerro Gordo County for periods lasting less than two weeks during 2005. Because the IPP study period was 2 weeks and the Service Point study period was 4 weeks, the annualizing calculations were done separately for these two groups for those people who had been homeless less than one month. Persons in the Service Point database for whom we knew their exact length of homelessness because they exited during the study period were simply multiplied by the appropriate factor (either 26, 12, 6, 3 or 1). Individuals reported by schools and head start programs were already annualized and were simply added at the end.

## Data Collection

The Iowa Policy Project designed six different surveys. Within the different surveys, some questions were customized to be relevant to the responding agency. That is, school surveys included questions on educational issues, shelter surveys asked about shelter capacity, etc. Likewise, cover letters and support documents were tailored to the particular version of the survey sent. *Appendix II includes samples of all the survey materials.*

- ✓ Letter of support from Governor Vilsack
- ✓ Outgoing envelope that called attention to the study period and importance of the documents enclosed
- ✓ Postage-paid business reply envelope for returning the survey
- ✓ Cover letters
- ✓ Instructions
- ✓ Survey instruments
- ✓ Help sheet
- ✓ Privacy statement

All surveys and cover letters featured our toll-free and e-mail help line information. While no formal training sessions were conducted, research staff appeared on ICN sessions for the Iowa Homeless Council on March 18 and the Department of Education on March 18 and March 28 in order to announce the study, to explain the basics of the survey and to answer any questions. Members of the Iowa Council on Homelessness did their part to make agencies aware of the survey through newsletters, emails, meetings, and phone calls. In particular, Ray Morley worked with the school district homeless liaisons to ensure their participation and Lyle Schwery sent emails to his entire list-serve of homeless service providers.

As mentioned earlier, this study relied on our own surveys as well as two external sources of data: Service Point and Project Easier. We were provided with Service Point data from about 238 different homeless service providers during our two-week study period along with an additional two weeks of data (ending April 22). For more information on data collected by Service Point, please consult the Iowa Institute for Community Alliances.

Our estimates for the number of homeless school-aged children also came from an external data source. Every school in Iowa is required to report the number of homeless students in their school at any time during the school year to the Iowa Department of Education (through Project EASIER). The Iowa Department of Education de-duped this data for us and provided it along with basic demographic information for each student. For more information on data collected from Project EASIER, please consult the Iowa Department of Education.

Next, we provide more detailed information on the surveys conducted by Iowa Policy Project.

### **Schools**

All 1,532 public K-12 schools in Iowa (including elementary, middle, secondary, and alternative schools) were surveyed about homelessness in their schools (these surveys did not ask about near-homelessness). In order to encourage participation, we enlisted the assistance of 371 school district homeless liaisons (in 367 school districts). Survey packets for all schools were bundled together by school district and mailed to the appropriate liaisons. The liaisons were instructed to deliver the survey packets to each school in their district. The mailing was completed by March 11, 2005. Liaisons were provided with a sample survey packet for their own reference and directed them to our toll-free phone and e-mail assistance if they had questions.

Each school survey packet was pre-addressed to the appropriate principal and school based on a mailing list provided by the Iowa Department of Education.

The deadline for returning surveys was April 22, but we continued to accept completed surveys as long as they came in. All liaisons received follow-up e-mails before and after the deadline to remind them about the survey. Liaisons in school districts with low response rates received telephone and additional e-mail reminders.

In designing the school survey instrument, we were aware that basic demographic information and a count of homeless children enrolled in public schools would be provided through Project EASIER. We consulted with the Department of Education to minimize the duplication of information collected between our survey and Project EASIER.

All school principals received Part One of the survey, which focused on their perspectives and impressions of the homeless situation in their district as well as the barriers to enrollment and

educational needs of homeless children. Part One also asked schools to estimate the number of students who were homeless at any point during the school year. However, our final estimate of homelessness relied on data collected from Project EASIER.

In order to capture information on mental health, disability and substance abuse, a random sample of 25 percent of all public schools received a second part to their survey. Part Two of the survey collected information on each identified homeless student, including data requested by the Department of Human Services (DHS) on mental health, disability, and substance abuse. A minimal amount of demographic information was collected as a precaution in the event that Project EASIER data was not available in time for this report.

### ***Head Start Offices***

Head Start offices throughout the state were surveyed primarily via their CAP headquarters. Survey packets were mailed to 18 Head Start agencies and CAP headquarters. The list of Head Start offices was obtained from the Department of Education and the Iowa Head Start Association. Offices received a two-part survey. Part One (perspectives) asked general questions about homelessness in their school and community. Part Two collected individual information on each student identified as homeless at some point during the school year.

### ***Human Service Agencies & Homeless Shelters***

Surveys were mailed to agencies and shelters that provide direct services to homeless clients. We relied on the voluntary efforts of social service agencies and shelters to collect information on each homeless or near-homeless person/client accessing services during the two-week study period between March 28 and April 8, 2005. (Agencies and shelters that already report this information to the Service Point database were not asked to duplicate this information. Instead these Service Point agencies received a shorter survey that is discussed next). All agency and shelter surveys were mailed by March 16, 2005.

Surveys were sent to:

- 118 Community Action Program (CAP) outreach offices via their 18 CAP headquarters. CAP headquarters were directed to deliver the pre-assembled survey packets to all outreach offices under their jurisdiction. CAP headquarters were also invited to fill out Part One of the survey. This list was obtained from the Iowa Community Action Association.
- 107 DHS offices via the 8 Service Area Offices. Service Area Managers were directed to deliver the pre-assembled survey packets to all county DHS offices under their direction.
- 6 PATH offices (list provided by DHS)
- 57 community mental health centers (list provided by DHS)
- 99 General Assistance offices (list obtained from the Iowa State Association of Counties website)
- 84 shelters (list provided by the Department of Economic Development)

Each agency and shelter received Part One of the survey, which collected the organization's perspectives on the homeless situation in its local service area.

In order to meet the diverse data needs of the Iowa Council on Homelessness, Part Two of the survey collected a considerable amount of information on individuals and families identified as homeless or near-homeless. There was some concern about the burden of a lengthy survey form, so we designed two versions of Part Two of the survey (Form A and Form B).

A random selection process was used to determine which version of the survey each agency and shelter would receive. One subset received surveys that included questions on mental health, substance abuse, and disability status. The second subset received surveys that included questions about employment, insurance and Supplemental Security Income. In addition, our random selection process ensured that agencies within each county did not all receive the same version of the survey. In other words, both types of survey would reach each county.

We contacted all CAP headquarters and DHS Service Area Offices by phone to notify them that surveys were in the mail. Follow-up and reminder e-mails were sent to all agencies and shelters.

Due to the nature of the questions on these surveys, a help sheet and privacy statement was included. All agencies and shelters were instructed to post the privacy statement in a visible area or to read the statement to clients before administering the survey.

### ***Service Point Agencies***

The 129 agencies and shelters that report to Service Point were not required to fill out surveys on homeless and near-homeless individuals since this information would be available from the Service Point database.

Only Part One of the survey (perceptions) was sent to Service Point agencies. Surveys were mailed by March 18, 2005. The survey included notification about this study's use of data from the Service Point. Shelters were asked additional questions about the number of beds and the number of people turned away. The list of Service Point agencies was obtained from the Iowa Institute for Community Alliances.

### ***General Agencies/ Probation and Parole Officers***

By surveying only direct service providers, there was some concern that the study might overlook or miss some forms of homelessness that go unreported or under-reported. This seemed especially likely in rural areas, which often represent the most difficult areas to identify homelessness. To address this issue we sent Part One of the survey to a number of agencies and county-level departments that might encounter homeless individuals in the course of their work. These included all 99 county sheriffs, 27 free medical clinics, 21 Area Agencies on Aging (and their subcontractors), and all 87 county Veterans Affairs offices. The lists of sheriffs and veteran affairs offices were obtained from the Iowa State Association of Counties website. The list of free medical clinics was obtained from the Iowa City Free Medical Clinic and the list of Area Agencies on Aging was obtained from the Department of Elder Affairs. We also asked these agencies to estimate the number of homeless persons they had assisted or encountered during the first few months of 2005.

In addition, all probation and parole officers in Iowa received an e-mail notification inviting them to participate in an on-line (web-based) version of the survey.