



Disabilities and Homelessness

By Nicole Arcieri

Homelessness does not discriminate; anyone can be a victim, but some people are more likely to be homeless than others. In particular, people with disabilities are disproportionately affected by homelessness. According to the article, *Homelessness Among Individuals with Disabilities: Influential Factors and Scalable Solutions* by Erin Vinoski Thomas and Chloe Vercruysse, “...one quarter of individuals experiencing homelessness have a disability, including physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities...” Furthermore, according to Psychology Today, 30 to 40 percent of homeless people have a cognitive impairment.

According to Housing Rights Watch, “Persons with disabilities are at an increased risk of becoming homeless and socially excluded due to the prevalence of institutionalization, discrimination in access to services, inadequate housing and social supports, a lack of accessible and affordable housing stock and unaffordable rents.” Stigma and discrimination are also factors that contribute to the homelessness crisis among people with disabilities. They create barriers for housing and accessing social services, according to Housing Rights Watch.

People with disabilities are ostracized socially and economically. According to the Journal of Public Health Management and Practice, they often make sub-minimum wages. Moreover, many shelters do not meet accessibility standards; a shelter’s infrastructure may be inaccessible to people in wheelchairs or staff members may not be adequately trained to work with people with disabilities. “Front-line staff may not be equipped to provide reasonable and necessary accommodations to these populations, such as alternatives to pat-downs and accommodations for other sensory needs,” according to the Journal of Public Health Management and Practice.

To combat these issues, it is our responsibility as a society to eliminate the stigma around having a disability, whether it be a physical or mental disability. Accessibility should be the standard, not the exception. People who have disabilities can and want to be productive members of society, they just need the resources to get going. If we live in an ableist community, how can we expect people with disabilities to function in their daily lives?