



# Aged Homelessness

Homeless populations are already denied the basic necessity for shelter and, many times, for proper means of hygiene and healthcare. This is already a prevalent issue, especially for more vulnerable populations, such as the elderly. According to the New York State Health Foundation, the population of elderly homeless people has only been increasing. In 2017, for example, [“the number of shelter residents ages 50 and older in New York City topped 17,000.”](#) That’s around three times the elderly homeless population in 2004. This number also does not include homeless individuals that don’t live in shelters but on the streets.

This number becomes increasingly concerning when taking healthcare and shelter costs into account. An individual’s healthcare and hygiene needs tend to increase with age; it, therefore, becomes exponentially expensive for homeless shelters to provide residents with sufficient medications, nursing care, and other necessary services. According [to a study by the University of Pennsylvania](#), “it is predicted that the homeless population ages 55 and over could soon cost the nation an estimated \$5 billion annually in health care and shelter costs alone if this population continues to be underserved.”

This is a big issue, as homeless shelters are becoming less and less equipped to take care of a population that is already so vulnerable. This shows the need for homeless programs that are

targeted specifically toward older people. Elders affected by homelessness would benefit from programs that allow them to move in with family, get an apartment by themselves or with a roommate, or have palliative care that is easily accessible. The needs of older unhoused individuals are different, so the guidance offered to them needs to be different too.

By Nicole Alesso