



# Homelessness and Disabilities

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Homelessness in the United States is a serious problem. In the U.S. alone there are over half a million people that experience homelessness every night. And over the course of a year somewhere between 2.5 million and 3.5 million people experience homelessness. Research showed that roughly 40 percent of homeless people have some sort of cognitive impairment, this can be anything from traumatic brain injury, intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, learning difficulties, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. These people are at a huge risk living on the streets, these people struggle to find help for their health issues. Being homeless especially in 2020 proposes a huge number of health risks. More than half of the homeless people sleep unsheltered every night bringing about even more risk to their health. Homeless people with disabilities face more problems than the average homeless person.

Homeless people alone face many problems every day, but if they have any sort of disability this can be even harder on them. Many shelters are inaccessible to people with disabilities, this is subject to change hopefully seeing as several major cities are making legal cases to get these shelters improved around their cities. But another problem is that shelter staff may not be trained to work with people with disabilities, making it hard for them to get the help that they need should something happen while they are in the shelter. This can be a huge problem for people whose disabilities are not apparent such as people with autism or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. So, the staff are often not outfitted to

provide the accommodations that these people need, things like an alternative to a pat-down or some help when it comes to sleeping. It can be difficult for people with disabilities to get out of homelessness, causing them to be put into a rut of chronic homelessness.

They fall into these patterns because they experience housing, healthcare, wage, and employment discrimination making it difficult for them to get into secure and sustainable housing on their own. There are even some studies that showed people with intellectual disabilities were reported to want to remain homeless. In some cases, they could not remember their original home address and were less likely to reintegrate into their families.

Overall people with intellectual disabilities have a higher risk of becoming homeless because of the problems facing them every day. These people need extra accommodations not offered by most shelters making it hard for them to get help and thus pushing them back into these patterns. Larger cities are putting in place legal actions to help better accommodate people with disabilities in big cities, but this isn't going to completely stop the problem. With all the help they can get there are still tons of problems that they will face every day. So, there is still a lot of work to be done to help homeless people with disabilities as well as the homeless community as a whole.

#### Resources:

What We Know About Homelessness and Intellectual Disability. (2020, September 29). Retrieved October 15, 2020, from Psychology Today website:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/evidence-based-living/202009/what-we-know-about-homelessness-and-intellectual-disability>

Thomas, E. V., & Vercruyse, C. (2019, July 24). Homelessness Among Individuals with Disabilities: Influential Factors and Scalable Solutions. Retrieved October 16, 2020, from JPHMP Direct

website: <https://jphmpdirect.com/2019/07/24/homelessness-among-individuals-with-disabilities/>